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PAṆḌITĀ RAMĀBĀÏ IN 1888

BUILDERS OF MODERN INDIA

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BY

NICOL MACNICOL, M.A., D.Litt.

Author of *Indian Theism, Psalms of Maratha Saints, The Making of Modern India*, Etc.



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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

An explanation is, I think, needed for the appearance of a Life of Paṇḍitā Ramābāī by one who, by the fact that he is a man and that he is not an Indian, is of necessity an onlooker somewhat removed from her life and its achievements. My excuse is implied in the fact that this Life is included in a series of "Builders of Modern India." The aim that I have in view is to show the Paṇḍitā in her place not only as a Christian but as an Indian, a true product of India's past and a powerful fashioner of India's future. Others have written of her who knew her far more intimately and personally than was possible for me; I have made an attempt rather to grasp and to present the idea of her life, when in her person the Indian soul meets Christ and is transformed. Further, my desire has been to make this woman better known to those in India who, like her, call themselves Christians. The Christian Church is as yet in India a small and often a despised company, but when its members recall this woman's life and service they can lift up their heads. She bears upwards their hopes on the strong wings of her spirit. They can be proud and courageous as they remember her.

To many friends who have willingly helped in supplying, as far as they could, some of the inevitable deficiencies in my equipment for the production of this book I desire to make grateful acknowledgment. There are, first, the workers at Mukti, especially Miss M. Lissa Hastie and

Miss Macgregor. There are also, among others: Mr. D. G. Vaidya, editor of the *Subodha Patrika*; Canon L. B. Butcher, of the C.M.S., Bombay; Sister Olive, of the Community of St. Mary the Virgin, Poona; Miss Gedge, of the Missionary Settlement for University Women, Bombay, who obtained information for me of the Paṇḍitā's life at Cheltenham; Mr. R. A. Adams, of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Bombay; and Miss Duggan, Poona, who helped me to obtain pictures of the Paṇḍitā. Miss M. L. Fuller very kindly allowed me to see in manuscript an article on the Paṇḍitā which was to appear in the magazine, *Asia*, and from which I have taken the liberty of making some quotations. I am also indebted to my wife for preparing the Index and for much other assistance.

Poona,
October, 1926.

N. MACNICOL.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE appearance of a second edition of this little book gives me an opportunity of citing the testimony of Professor Rudolf Otto to the significance, in the Indian context, of Paṇḍitā Ramābāī's life and service. Dr. Otto, who is well known as the author of *The Idea of the Holy*, is able, as a student of Indian religion, to estimate with full knowledge the value of the witness borne by the spiritual pilgrimage of the Paṇḍitā from Brāhmanism to Christianity.

"I have caused," Dr. Otto writes, "this Life of Paṇḍitā Ramābāī to be translated into German, for one reason, because it appears to me to mirror in an extraordinary way the renewing and vitalising power of the Christian faith, but likewise because it affords deep insight into the religious and spiritual world both of India and of Brāhmanism, and because in Ramābāī we are dealing with a personality typical of self-surrender and of spiritual depth. But I have done so especially because her life brings into clear light at once the essential quality and the uniqueness of the Christian religious experience as over against other religious beliefs—beliefs in their own way elevated and worthy of admiration. Ramābāī herself came forth from the environment of the Indian religion of grace (*bhakti*), which in her own Marāṭhā land has assumed forms and produced songs of an impressive kind, but which nevertheless cannot satisfy a soul that is seeking the Highest and the Ultimate. Because of these characteristics, this book concerns the theologian and also the historian of religion, who, in view of

the remarkable parallels and resemblances between many forms of religion, is often in danger of overlooking those individual qualities that differentiate them from each other and give them their higher value and their deeper truth.

"Personally I would beg those who have studied my books, on *Western and Eastern Mysticism* and on *Christianity and the Indian Religion of Grace*, to become acquainted with Ramābāī. She is the living example who can elucidate the questions I have there dealt with."

N. MACNICOL.

Edinburgh,
June, 1930.

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I

HER HERITAGE

EVERY saint is, as such, an immediate creation of God and inexplicable apart from Him. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in their hearts." If the creative alone explains St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Teresa, it alone explains Paṇḍitā Ramābāī. None of the great saints acknowledged more fully than she that dependence on divine creative power within which alone the holy life is begun, continued and consummated. And what she acknowledged as an inward rule, she followed in her outward conduct. She lived, as very few have lived, in daily practice of the faith that such a source of supply for all our human wants is open to us and available. It would be untrue to the facts, and it would be wholly untrue to Paṇḍitā Ramābāī's own experience and testimony, to put that acknowledgment of the motive power that lay behind all that she was and did anywhere else than in the forefront of any record of her life. But while that acknowledgment must be made, one is surely blind who fails to see how rich were the elements inherited from her past, and her people's past, that went at the same time to the making of this great Christian woman. Though there was a sudden fracture in her life—an end, and an enriching new beginning—yet there was, none the less, a continuity. This fact might be in some measure hidden from herself. It may have seemed to her that her

"heathen" inheritance had a stain upon it that made it a peril to her soul. She may have believed of herself, like the barbarian king, that, when the change came, she "burned what she had adored and adored what she had burned," but there are some things that we cannot burn and, happily, much that was precious passed over with the reborn nature of the Hindu convert. Her life had deep Indian roots which we must trace some way into their recesses if we are to know her aright.

Paṇḍitā Rāmābāī's forbears were Chitpāwan Brāhmans. Her father was an adherent of one of the great *bhakti* sects of Hinduism. These two facts represent two influences that contributed powerfully to make her what she was and, therefore, it is necessary to understand what they signify. The Chitpāwans form one of the twelve divisions of Mahārāshṭra Brāhmans. They first emerge from obscurity and begin to have a place in history when one of them, early in the eighteenth century, left his village in the Konkan and became attached to the establishment of Shāhu, the Marāṭhā king, grandson of the famous warrior king, Śivājī. This able Chitpāwan rose in six years from the position of a clerk to that of Peśwa, or Prime Minister, and on the path by which he climbed to power many others of his fellow-Chitpāwans followed him to similar positions of authority and influence. The hundred years during which this family ruled as Peśwas in Poona forms the most brilliant period of Marāṭhā history, but by the beginning of the nineteenth century their power had begun to decay and another empire was able to wrest the sceptre from them and seat itself in their place of power. With the fall of this family there did not come, however, a fall of the remarkable group to which they belonged. Under the British rule Chitpāwans have

always held great positions in the Western Province of India, and no influence has been, and is today, more powerful than theirs. They have been, and are, among the wisest and the most resolute of the builders of the new India. It was a great Chitpāwan, Mahādev Govind Rānaḍe, who laid broad and deep, with patient and unsparing labour, the foundations of the modern social movement. Another, a son of his spirit, was the most far-seeing statesman of the last generation, Gopāl Kṛishṇa Gokhale. The powerful demagogue, Bāl Gangādhar Ṭiḷak, was another, and yet another in a very different sphere was the poet Nārāyan Vāman Ṭiḷak. The Western Province has provided the whole of India with a shining example of what vision and self-reliance can accomplish in the region of education, and the teachers and professors who have given themselves to this task in a spirit of self-sacrifice are overwhelmingly members of this Chitpāwan caste. Institutions such as the Sevā Sadan and the Indian Women's University at Poona, that are doing so much to transform the outlook of the Indian woman, are the product of their toil, the realization of their dreams. India in all its provinces has at all times shown itself able to produce those who can think "thoughts that wander through eternity." Is not existence itself a dream of Brahma? And, too often, it has seemed in this land, in its long, brooding past, that "but to think is to be full of sorrow and leaden-eyed despair." The distinction of the Chitpāwan Brāhman is to be found in the fact that he can not only dream, but can realize his dreams. Where so many seem to be talkers only, or dreamers only, he can not only talk and dream but act. He—in the American phrase—"puts things across." It was in no small measure the fact that she inherited these qualities from her Chitpāwan ancestors that gave Paṇḍitā Ramābāī the natural

endowments that fitted her to fulfil her task as one of the builders of the highway for the coming India.

Thus one important aspect of this Indian woman's character and achievement is bound up with the fact of this heritage that came to her down the long and guarded line of her Chitpāwan forbears. Nature contributed this element to her making. Another element that was mingled in her was a contribution less of nature than of spirit. Bhakti represents in Indian religious tradition something that may be said to have its parallel in the evangelical fervours of emotional Christianity. Much of Indian religion is impersonal and cold, or formal and prescribed; but at intervals all through its history, passion and intensity and devotion to a God beloved have flowered up from the sun-baked soil. They may sometimes seem to have been poison-flowers—emotions, uncontrolled, with less depth in them than turbidity. But the root of the matter is in these bhakti cults, if the root of the matter in the religion be the desire for personal fellowship, for union with God. Now Ramābāi's father was one of those who turned away from the worship of the Impersonal to this bhakti faith. By a deliberate choice he abandoned *advaita* doctrine, which has always had so powerful a grasp of the Indian mind, and became a Vaishṇavite, exchanging the exercises of philosophy for the services of devotion. His daughter inherited from him, we must suppose, this religious attitude, and thus became an heir of the succession of bhakti saints. To have learned from her father to drink at this stream, to have had in this way her desire awakened for what only the love of a Divine Person could satisfy, was a gift of which we can scarcely exaggerate the preciousness. Her soul was not drugged to sleep with pantheistic potions, as to a theistic observer seems so often to be the case with

those who have taken over India's heritage of monism. At the *math*[1] of the Mādhavas at Udipi, Ramābāī's father must have learned to think of religion as a complete dependence upon the sovereign will of the Lord, and if his daughter learned that lesson as a child from his lips it was a lesson that she had never as a Christian to unlearn. The spirit of bhakti at its purest and highest is in no wise alien to the spirit of Christian loyalty and devotion, and Ramābāī, we cannot doubt, took over more than she was aware of from the long line of Hindu saints and seekers, and carried it with her into the Christian faith that seemed to her so different and so new. There was in her case this other strand intertwined with Chitpāwan shrewdness and strength and practical sagacity and forming part of the fibre of her being. Her natural and her spiritual heritages combined to prepare her to be one day, through the baptism of the divine grace, the great Christian, at once saint and practical mystic, that she became.

These two facts possess more significance in Paṇḍitā Ramābāī's ancestral heritage than any others, but they had at the same time, by reason of their Indian environment, certain consequences and accompaniments that it is important we should note if we are to realize the air her childhood breathed and the elements that were mingled in her making. The soil she sprang from was Indian soil, and what that means is, perhaps, best suggested by some account of her parents' peculiarly Indian history. Her Chitpāwan father was known as Anant Śāstri Dongre, a native of the village of Malherambi, at the foot of the Western Ghauts, in the district of Mangalore. The title Śāstri, with its implication of Sanskrit learning, was bestowed on him by a learned

[1] Monastery.

Brāhman of Poona, under whom he studied for four years. His teacher was attached to the court of the last of the Peśwas, Bājirao II, who from 1795 to 1818 ruled in Poona. The significant fact about Anant Śāstri's *guru* was that he was engaged, contrary to all custom and tradition, in teaching Sanskrit to Bājirao's wife, Vārāṇasī Bāī. There can be little doubt that this example and the charm that the forbidden language had on the young princess's lips created in young Anant the resolve that the women of his household should enjoy the same privilege. In 1818, on the overthrow of the Peśwa's sovereignty by the British, Anant Śāstri returned to his home in Mangalore district, but he did not remain there long. His whole life henceforward was given up to two interests: first, to the study and the teaching of Sanskrit learning; and, secondly, to pilgrimage. Ten years were spent under the patronage of the Mahārājā of Mysore. They were years of wealth and prodigality. A scholar and saint—the two words may almost be reckoned as synonyms in India—seldom lacked in those days a generous patron, and such a one Anant Śāstri seems to have found in the Mahārājā. A pilgrimage to Benares followed, and then more years spent there and in Nepal in philosophical study. There also he enjoyed the patronage of the ruler. Thus years went past filled with wandering and contemplation, religion and learning having always the first place among his concerns. Though he travelled in these days in luxury with a large following, there must have been many hardships to endure, and it is little wonder that his wife died somewhere by the way. It was when he was returning homewards, after many years spent thus in the north, that at Peiṭhan, a town famous in its day as one of the headquarters of Hindu ecclesiastical authority, he found

his second wife, Ramābāī's mother, who with her father was also on pilgrimage.

Religious pilgrimage and Sanskrit philosophical learning were the two absorbing interests of Anant Śāstri's life. Wealth might come to him through the lavish generosity of his patrons, but as it came easily it was as easily and as generously spent. Anant Śāstri's thoughts were elsewhere. When he reached once more his village home in Mangalore, with his little wife of nine years of age, he was a man of forty-four. He had now an opportunity of realizing his wish to teach his wife Sanskrit, as the Peśwa's wife had been taught by his teacher so long before. But it is never easy to blaze a new trail, and least of all in India. The difficulties in this reformer's path made it impossible for him to remain among those who did all they could to thwart his purpose. He was driven forth into the wilderness, as Rāma had been in ancient days. Taking his wife with him, he betook himself to a romantic spot in the Gangāmūla Forest, where three rivers had their sources, and there, amid the loneliness and the beauty of nature, where the prejudices of man could not thwart him, this resolute man made his abode. A story that Ramābāī, no doubt, had from her mother, tells how the husband and his child-wife lay down on their first night in the jungle with not even a grass hut to shelter them, and how the sudden roar of a huge tiger not far off struck terror into her heart. It was here that the little Laxmībāī was to live for many years and acquire a knowledge of the learned and forbidden language. Here she and her husband tamed the jungle and made in it a home for their children and an *āśrama* to which, as to Yājñavalkya three thousand years before, disciples, drawn by the scholar's learning, gathered from far. She who had come there as a timid child and

had wrapped her *sāri* round her head to shut out the dark and the jungle noises, now showed herself a true Chitpāwan by her control of a great establishment. As one of Ramābāī's Indian biographers has pointed out,[1] the remarkable administrative abilities, that her daughter was to display on a larger scale later, were first disclosed in the mother's able management of her husband's pupils and of her cattle in the āśrama in the Gangāmūla Forest.

This "forest period" of Anant Śāstri's life lasted, we are told, for twelve and a half years. During that time the child-wife, Laxmībāī, pursued her Sanskrit studies under his direction with such success that in her husband's absence she was able to take charge of the studies of his disciples. An achievement so contrary to religious custom would not have been realized, even in the recesses of a forest, were it not for the resolute purpose, in the face of opposition and contumely, of her husband. He seems to have returned to what, adopting the analogy of Hebrew religion, we may call "prophetic" as opposed to "priestly" Hinduism, and to have abandoned many of the traditional prejudices and superstitions of the day. He had returned from his travels and studies in North India a Vaishṇavite, and it was in the monastery at Udipi, the headquarters of the Madhva sect of Vaishṇavite Hinduism, that he was required to defend before a jury of four hundred "scholars, priests, śāstris of the Karnataka" his heretical opinions. He had, we are told, collected and written down a great body of evidence to prove that the scriptures did not forbid to women the sacred language, and for two months continuously he maintained his argument, finally routing, it is said, his accusers. In spite of

[1] D. G. Vaidya, *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*.

his victory, however, he found it advisable to retire with his wife (like the sage of the Upanishads with his wife Maitreyī) to his forest hermitage.

It was when this phase of Anant Śāstri's career was drawing to its close that that of his daughter Ramābāī began. Six children were born to him and his wife Laxmībāī, and of these three died in childhood. With the birth of the last of these we pass from Anant Śāstri's strange and chequered history to that of this true daughter of his resolute and eager spirit. We can see how much flowed from the veins of that father and that mother into those of their daughter. The spirit of the wilderness into which she was born, and which had become to them a refuge, the courage that would take the road of freedom and of conviction, the idealism that counted wealth and ease and comfort as nothing when weighed in the scales with truth, and the faith that sent them forth as pilgrims—all these things Ramābāī fell heir to when she was born in the forest hermitage of Gangāmūla. They make up a heritage that one could hardly enter into anywhere except in India. In that land it is no strange thing to reckon all that the world can give, compared with a dream of truth or a glimpse of the far-off God, as no more than a little dust under one's feet. The child last born to Anant Śāstri inherited from him little else, but she inherited this.

II

WANDER YEARS: 1858–1878

"A WANDERER is man from his birth," could almost literally be said of Ramābāī. She was born in the Gangāmūla Forest on the tenth day of the light half of the month Vaiśākha, in the year of our Lord 1858. That date corresponds to a day in April. The days of Anant Śāstri's prosperity were by this time drawing to their close; the folly and the fraud of his own relatives had wrought his ruin. It became necessary for him to abandon his lodge in the wilderness and to seek with his wife and children some new means of livelihood. "There was not in a single member of this family," an Indian biographer[1] of Ramābāī remarks, "either foresight or a legitimate care for their own interest." They had had their period of prosperity, when gifts were lavished upon them. We hear how in his early years the Mahārājā of Mysore presented Anant Śāstri once with twenty-five thousand rupees;[2] we hear also of gifts of elephants and much wealth from the King of Nepal. Ramābāī even makes this statement, which sounds to us scarcely credible—"I remember that on one occasion my father had a hundred and seventy-five thousand rupees[3] presented to him." We must, however, bear in mind that these things befell in India, a land where learning has always been held in the

[1] D. G. Vaidya, op. cit. [2] £1,650. [3] £11,650.

most profound reverence. If the kings there were not philosophers, they were seldom unwilling to honour philosophers, and prodigality was reckoned a king-becoming virtue. But this unworldly sage had no capacity to exploit his good fortune, and even his shrewd Chitpāwan wife could not avert the inevitable catastrophe. Thus it came about that when the little girl was only a few months old she began her pilgrimage, and was borne in a basket on the head of a servant from the jungle paradise, as it seemed to her fancy, where her parents had lived for twelve and a half years. Up till 1882, Ramābāī tells us, the champaks and rosebushes and other flowering shrubs, and the mangoes and many other fruit trees, remained to witness to her mother's goodness and her father's courage, but long ere this the wilderness has had its way once more and the panther and the jackal rule where for a while Anant Śāstri taught his *chelas*.[1]

So began Ramābāī's long years of wandering. This is the dimmest period of her life. It is not surprising that that should be so, for no one could tell of it but herself and in the early part she was a child, while of the later time of hardship and suffering she was slow afterwards to speak, and indeed it may well have been that these distressful and monotonous years became blurred in her memory. She was the last-born of her family, and soon the last survivor. When she emerges before us into clear light she is alone—father, mother, sister and brother have fallen one after the other by the way, and only this little woman of the indomitable heart wins through, not hardened or coarsened by the long discipline through which she has passed, but tempered and refined. This school of suffering was

[1] Disciples.

Paṇḍitā Rāmābāī's university. She emerges cultured, discerning, self-controlled, with eyes made quiet by the power of sympathy. This is one of the most amazing aspects of Rāmābāī's whole history—her emergence unscathed from these long years of life as what in other lands would be called a tramp, a beggar—though she never begged—but in India is called a pilgrim. She passes through poverty and the worst ills of life, through a furnace of trial, and comes forth with no smell of fire upon her. She comes forth a graduate in Life, in its wisdom and calm judgment. Perhaps such a thing is possible only in India.

She was six months old when they left their home in the forest. "Thus," she says, "my pilgrim life began when I was a little baby." Again she says, "When I was about eight years old, my mother began to teach me and continued to do so till I was about fifteen years of age."[1] She goes on, "During these years she succeeded in training my mind so that I might be able to carry on my own education with very little aid from others." Elsewhere she tells us, "My lessons began with the committing of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the Bhagavadgītā to memory. Besides, the elementary Sanskrit grammar and the vocabulary and dictionary, which is all in verse, were also taught. But the Bhāgavata Purāṇa was supposed to contain all that was necessary for a child to learn."[2] There is no doubt that Laxmībāī was a remarkable woman, but we must remember that she had a remarkable pupil in her daughter. The study of Sanskrit is one of the most severe of disciplines to which mind and memory can be subjected. By its means this girl was being quickened and strengthened in all her

[1] This and other quotations that follow are taken from her *Testimony*.

[2] *Mukti Prayer Bell*, March, 1904.

natural faculties and prepared for the service that awaited her in days to come.

She was certainly not allowed to stagnate. The panorama of India, in all its mystery and its variety, passed continually before her and she had eyes to see it. These eyes of hers cannot indeed be passed by unnoticed. They were always a feature that caught attention. They were not brown, as is the almost invariable rule in India, but grey. This is, indeed, an idiosyncracy of not a few Chitpāwans, and has suggested the fantastic theory that they are descended from a Viking crew, wrecked in their long boat on the west coast of India. We may be sure at all events that these quiet, watchful eyes garnered and stored up in memory many a rich harvest, as the little group went to and fro from province to province and from shrine to shrine. "Ever since I remember anything," she says, "my father and mother were always travellers from one sacred place to another, staying in each place some months, bathing in the sacred river or tank, visiting temples, worshipping household gods and the images of gods in the temples, and reading Purāṇas in temples and in some convenient places."

The profession that the family followed was that of Purāṇikas, that is, of expounders of the Purāṇas. "The Epics and Purāṇas," Dr. Farquhar says,[1] "are the real Bible of the common people, whether literate or illiterate." They are "popular sectarian compilations of mythology, philosophy, history and the sacred law,"[2] and they are, of course, written in Sanskrit. Here is Paṇḍitā Ramābāī's description of this profession which her parents and all the members of her family followed in their wanderings:

[1] *Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 138.
[2] Bühler's *Manu* (Sacred Books of the East), p. xcl.

"The readers of Purāṇas—Purāṇikas, as they are called—are the popular and public preachers of religion among the Hindus. They sit in some prominent place, in temple halls or under the trees, on the banks of rivers and tanks, with their manuscript books in their hands, and read the Purāṇas in a loud voice with intonation, so that the passers-by or visitors of the temple may hear. The text, being in the Sanskrit language, is not understood by the hearers. The Purāṇikas are not obliged to explain it to them. They may or may not explain it as they choose. And sometimes when it is translated and explained, the Purāṇika takes great pains to make his speech as popular as he can, by telling greatly exaggerated or untrue stories. This is not considered sin, since it is done to attract common people's attention, that they may hear the sacred sound, the names of the gods, and some of their deeds, and be purified by this means. When the Purāṇika reads Purāṇas, the hearers, who are sure to come and sit around him for a few moments at least, generally give him presents. The Purāṇika continues to read, paying no attention to what the hearers do or say. They come and go at their choice.

"When they come, the religious ones among them prostrate themselves before him and worship him and the book, offering flowers, fruits, sweetmeats, garments, money and other things. It is supposed that this act brings a great deal of merit to the giver, and the person who receives does not incur any sin. If a hearer does not give presents to the Purāṇika, he loses all the merit which he may have earned by good acts. The presents need not be very expensive ones; a handful of rice or other grains, a pice, or even a few cowries, which are used as an exchange of pice (sixty-four cowrie shells are equal to one pice) are quite acceptable. A flower, or even a petal of a flower, or a leaf of any good sacred tree is acceptable to the gods. But the offerer knows well that his store of merit will be according to what he gives, and he tries to be as generous as he can. So the Purāṇika gets all he needs by reading Purāṇas in public places.

"My parents followed this vocation. We all read

Purāṇas in public places, but did not translate or explain them in the vernacular. The reading and hearing of the sacred literature is in itself believed to be productive of great merit, *puṇya* as it is called by the Hindus. We never had to beg or work to earn our livelihood. We used to get all the money and food we needed, and more; what remained over after meeting necessary expenses was spent in performing pilgrimages and giving alms to the Brāhmans."

The profession that they followed was thus one that was highly honoured. They walked—barefoot, no doubt—from place to place: "The family," as the Marāṭhī biographer, Mr. D. G. Vaidya, expresses it, "carried its house about with it wherever it went, like a snail." Their possessions must have been few and of the very simplest sort. But India does not esteem such as they were because of the abundance of the things that they possess. The acceptance of poverty, or rather the mood of indifference alike to wealth and poverty, is an attainment honoured in its possessor, as one who has the spirit of the sage. To live from day to day and from year to year upon the alms of the people and yet not to grow greedy; to receive reverence and honour as semi-divine beings quite apart from what their character might deserve, and yet not to become arrogant; to live in comfort without labour or industry, and yet to preserve oneself from sloth and selfishness—these are attainments that might seem beyond the reach of human frailty, and yet they would appear, as far as we can judge, to have been to a remarkable extent attained by this family. There is something, no doubt, in the Brāhman tradition—as in the *noblesse oblige* that a real aristocracy may in a rare hour create—which acts as an armour against defilement—an austere ideal which draws its possessor ever on. This tradition lends itself to

oppression, to intolerance, to contempt for "lesser breeds without the law." The pride of the priestly office and the pride of exalted birth combine, too often, in the Brāhman to produce a temper gross, selfish, insufferable. And yet at times the tradition that man is God makes him who receives it from many generations of the past set his heart indeed upon being godlike. However we may explain it, a miracle presents itself to us in this family journeying through so much that might degrade them, and yet preserving nobility of life. Ramābāī was stern indeed in later days in her judgment of Hinduism; her clear eyes saw the insincerity and the fraud upon which so many of the religious practices about her were built up; but at the same time she gives us glimpses, in the midst of so much evil, of her father and mother, still great-hearted and sincere, and, after they had gone, of her brother and herself, seeking and seeking after good and God, but always disappointed. If we could realize for ourselves the experience of Ramābāī, inwardly and outwardly, during these years of pilgrimage, we would not be far off from measuring Hinduism in its height and in its depth.

We could wish for many more glimpses of these years and of how it was that their discipline touched this homeless company to such fine issues. The whole sub-continent belonged to them, as it belongs to every pilgrim in the land, and they journeyed north and south and east and west, as impulse, or the gust of a divine spirit within them, gave them direction. All India is crossed and recrossed by pilgrim tracks that never become grass-grown. As they travelled south to Comorin and Rameśwaram or west to Dwārkā or Paṇḍharpūr, or north to Badrināth and the holy Himalaya they were never lonely. "The prints of feet were numberless and holy all about them." At first they



RAMĀBĀĪ AS A CHILD, WITH HER FATHER, MOTHER AND BROTHER

must have travelled as did Joseph and Mary and the Holy Child going down to Egypt, with some pack-animal to carry mother and daughter. They did not limit their journeys to the land where their own Marāṭhī language was spoken, for Brāhmans are Brāhmans everywhere and the language in which they read the Purāṇas was Sanskrit. When Laxmībāī took her share in this duty, and, later, her daughter likewise, many must have been shocked at such impiety. It is difficult to understand how it was suffered in places where orthodoxy was entrenched. For a woman to read the sacred Sanskrit language was popularly viewed as something far worse than the crowing of a hen: it was something not merely against nature, but against religion. It may be, however, that interest in the rare and strange overcame prejudice, and, still more probably, the sweetness of their utterance as they read. It is one of the most remarkable facts in all Ramābāī's career how she disarmed criticism and won her way in the face of opposition.

Ramābāī tells of one or two of the many sacred places that they visited. Her account was written after she had been for many years a Christian and when the evil aspects of the religion of her fathers stood out in grim relief against the faith she now lived by. Like most of the great reformers, and like most converts to a new faith who have passed through a deep and emancipating experience, like St. Paul and Martin Luther, like Muhammad also and Dayānand Saraswati, Ramābāī turned away with a strong aversion from the bondage which had before held her. We cannot expect a balanced judgment from such a witness. The evil that she saw and fled from she describes, without palliation, as she saw it. She was never afraid to express what she was convinced of, if she believed that truth demanded it, and the evils of Hinduism she believed, even

before she turned wholly from the old religion, to deserve and require frank exposure.

She began early to observe with her clear grey eyes. "The earliest recollections that I have of the religious life of our people," she says, "are from the time I was about four years old." She then goes on to tell of their visit to Venkatgiri, a hill near Tirupati in the Chittoor district of the Madras Presidency. This is a famous place of pilgrimage where Hinduism could be observed in all its comprehensiveness. Rāmābāī says somewhere that "the ideas of the Hindus are a hopeless mixture of good and evil." This is certainly true of the worship at this sacred place, which seems to be a blend of Śaivism and Vaishṇavism, of non-Aryan nature worship and of a higher orthodox cultus. Rāmābāī's family were Vaishṇavas, as we have seen, but here they found animal sacrifices, which are abhorrent to Vaishṇavism, offered to the gods. They must, with their knowledge of a higher Hinduism, have found much in this place that was repugnant to them. Her account of the professional "devotees" that gather in this holy hill is not exaggerated and could be paralleled in regard to such parasites on religion from other lands besides India. She says:

"In addition to the priests there are what they call *bairāgis* and *sannyāsis*, i.e. religious beggars and mendicants. These are mostly very idle. There are about six millions of them in this country. They wander from place to place. Some have very little clothing. Some have almost nothing. They besmear their bodies with ashes and mud and various colours, and wear long strings of wooden beads, and matted hair, and go about begging.

"Their life is a miserable one. They are mostly ignorant and pretend to great sanctity of life. They chew and smoke tobacco, ganja, opium and other such drugs. They

are very coarse in their speech and their character is not good. There are some exceptions, but they only prove the rule.

"My parents used to remark that these were bad and immoral people, and so were the local priests. And yet they worshipped them, because that was prescribed by their religion and was the popular custom. . . . These priests tell any number of lies to deceive the pilgrims. My parents knew all about these lies and laughingly made mention of them. But yet the priests were looked upon as very gods and worshipped accordingly."

She goes on to tell how they all bathed in the Pāpanāśini Falls, because, as the name signifies, by these waters their sins, they believed, would be destroyed; but they "knew in their own hearts," she adds, "that the sins remained where they were, as before."

They moved among these "bad and immoral people," as not a few others like them, we may believe, did also, guarded by some armour they possessed against contamination. They saw plainly that many of the representatives of religion were evil and yet they worshipped them. A more recent writer, himself a Hindu and a wholehearted admirer, in the fashion of today, of "the soul of India," Dhan Gopal Mukerji, tells the same story. In Benares, he says, "we visited a stark-naked man, fat as a Śiva bull, who denied God so vehemently that, compared with his talk, Ingersoll's or Huxley's words read like sermons. . . . Yet there were many men and women who said that this fat fellow helped them to live their life better. There was no doubt in their minds that he was a holy man."[1] And the same writer tells us how his own mother, a woman of gentle and gracious nature, perhaps like Laxmībāī, Ramābāī's mother, gave milk to a yellow-robed rascal

[1] *My Brother's Face*, p. 79.

to offer to God, and when he had drunk it up greedily she remarked, smiling kindly, "Is God satisfied? Or wilt thou have some more to drink?"[1] Is this large-hearted tolerance or is it a world-weary non-moral, or sub-moral, indifference?

Such experiences as these must have been multiplied many times as year followed year and the panorama of the pilgrimage unrolled itself before them. When she was a child of seven, she tells us, she was at another Vaishṇavite shrine at Dakor, in the Kaira district of Gujarāt, where Kṛishṇa is worshipped under the name of Ranchor. She tells us of a deception that was practised here upon the pilgrims, and how they accepted it, though they knew it to be a deception, because it was a means to make men holy. She adds, "They were all in earnest," deceivers and deceived, "and had gone to the holy place to get rid of their sins." After all, if the whole universe is illusion and deceit, why should these acts of men be so greatly blamed? And so father and mother and children move unruffled through earth's war, the eternal calm to gain. A tranquil mind, far above this "mortal, moral strife," is their aim, and it seems to have been in some measure achieved.

We see Ramābāī next at the age of thirteen or fourteen at Dwārkā where, on the coast of Kathiawār, one of the most famous of Vaishṇavite shrines looks out across the Arabian Sea. It was to this city, created in a night by Kṛishṇa's magic power, that he transported his faithful people when hostile hordes threatened to overwhelm Mathura. "It is said in the Purāṇas," Ramābāī tells us, "that Dwārkā was an island city, all built with gold and precious stones, where Kṛishṇa lived and reigned over his

[1] Op. cit., p. 144.

people, the Yādavas. After he left this earth the island city sank in the sea and disappeared." His palace still remained, but invisible to sinful eyes. Ramābāī tells these tales with the vivid memory, no doubt, of how they sounded in her ears when she heard them in Dwārkā itself, an eager child of thirteen years. She tells, too, the famous story of Mirābāī, the Rajput princess who loved Kṛishṇa more than she loved her husband, the Rānā.[1] She did not want to live with her husband, but to lead a single life in the service of Kṛishṇa. When the messengers of the king, her husband, came to compel her to return to him, the image to which she clung opened and " she crept into the hollow " and it closed again. Thus she became one with the Kṛishṇa of her adoration. One of the songs of Mirābāī, that Ramābāī may well have heard sung in the temple courts of Dwārkā, tells of her love:

" Kanh have I bought; the price he asked I paid :
Some cry 'Too great,' while others jeer, ''Twas small':
I paid in full, weighed to the utmost grain,
My love, my life, my self, my soul, my all."[2]

Ramābāī's comment on the story is one which reveals to us the champion of women's emancipation from the bondage in which an evil tradition had enslaved them. She sees in Mirābāī a woman rejecting the worship of the husband and the enslavement it implies, choosing instead a higher symbol of the divine in which her passionate heart can find something more satisfying and enlarging.

[1] Prince.

[2] *Poems by Indian Women*, p. 59, edited by Margaret Macnicol. (Kanh is Kṛishṇa.)

They lived in Dwārkā for a year, lodging by the seashore, whose "moving waters" as they ebbed and flowed were, for the Hindu more literally than for the English poet, ever "at their priestlike task of pure ablution round earth's human shores." No priest could cleanse them from sin as these waters could. "The sea is the great reservoir of all the sacred waters; and bathing in the waters of the sea on each day of the year brings extraordinary merit to the bather. . . . So to live on the seaside for twelve months is a means of getting all the merit one can possibly get by bathing in all the sacred rivers of the Three Worlds. Such was the belief which led my parents to stay at Dwārkā for about a year."

Ramābāī describes one great day of festival during their stay there. It so befell that the rare conjunction of planets took place which is called Kapilashashṭhi, and which is only possible about once in sixty years. A peculiar favour was to be bestowed on that day by Kṛishṇa on his devotees. "He was going to present his golden city to the vision of his favoured ones. The invisible city was to be visible only to the eyes of the sinless ones among the pilgrims. All pilgrims could get rid of their sins by bathing in the sea that day, by worshipping the gods and Brāhmans, by giving alms and other presents to the priests.

She goes on to tell how pilgrims came in their thousands from far and near, to see the vision and to gain the reward. "Rājās and Mahārājās, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, people of all castes and grades came to Dwārkā to bathe in the sea on that sacred day." The girl of thirteen was not yet disillusioned. "We were impatient for the holy day to come." Then, towards evening, having bathed and given generous alms to Brāhmans and repeated sacred texts, they gazed across the sea for the

promised vision of the golden city. "It was misty and cloudy in the morning, but towards evening the sky cleared a little and the sun shone through the clouds. The much longed for time arrived. Part of the western sky and the clouds gathering near the horizon, brightened and lighted up with the golden rays of the setting sun, presented a most beautiful sight to our vision." So she goes on to tell how some thought they saw and some thought they did not see. "The cloud-capped towers, the solemn temples"—were they indeed the towers and temples of the mystic city or were they only cloudland? "Many people did not dare to say that they did not see the city, for that would be confessing that they were sinners. They kept silence about it and so did we. But we were convinced in our inmost hearts that we saw no city, but saw the ordinary clouds which we were accustomed to see, almost daily, at the time of sunset. . . . The pockets of the priests were filled with money and their houses with many other things, while the pilgrims went empty away."

These are a few specimens of many strange tales that Ramābāī tells us, leaving, we may be sure, many others that she could tell untold. What hopes and fears and longings that group of pilgrims—and not a few others, we must believe, as sincere as they—bore about with them in their eager hearts from one holy place to another! One of the most eager and resolute among them in his pursuit of the divine blessing was the brother Śrinivās. His sister tells us repeatedly of his prayers and austerities; how "for seven weeks he lived on a cup of water and a spoonful of sugar, taken daily; then for a week he took a little cup of milk every day; after that he fasted without taking food or water for a whole week." He "came very near dying," she says, and all the time with eager hope he was worshipping

Hanumān, the Monkey god, and out of his poverty giving what alms he could to Brāhmans. "But nothing unusual happened and my poor brother was greatly disappointed."

When all these efforts failed at Dwārkā, they were repeated at another temple of Hanumān at Ghatikachala, near Madras. "We stayed there for nearly a year, but did not see a single person whose prayers were answered nor one who had not suffered much by coming there. Still we went on with our service of the god. . . . This went on for months and months, until all the money which we had was finished." Thus hard times came upon them. A life of such wandering and hardship must have set its mark upon the older people especially. "This sort of life went on," she says, "until my father became too feeble to stand the exertion." "He was no longer able to direct the reading of the Purāṇas by us." Apparently his eyesight failed him. They were at this time, it would appear, in the Madras Presidency. "We suffered from famine," Ramābāī says, "which we had brought upon ourselves"—and in addition to this private famine, due to their own improvidence and unworldliness, there was the public distress with which the whole Presidency was stricken. This was what she describes as "the last great famine of the Madras Presidency, which reached its climax in the years 1876–77, but began at least three years before that date." The family were in no condition to face such a situation. "We were too proud," she says, "to beg or to do menial work, and ignorant of any way of earning an honest living. Nothing but starvation was before us. My father, mother and sister all died of starvation within a few months of each other."

We have little more information than that from which to reconstruct these months of agony. When the climax of

their troubles came upon them they seem to have been once more at Tirupati, which, as we have seen, she had visited, with her parents as a child. Now she was a young woman sixteen years of age, able to repeat thousands of Sanskrit verses from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, but to do nothing that could help them in such a strait as this. For eleven days and nights they maintained themselves on water and leaves and a few wild dates, until at the end there seemed to be no way of escape save death. When they had come to this pass it seemed to Anant Śāstri that he, at least, might end his sufferings in a fashion permitted to one such as he was, by what is known as "Jala-Samādhi." He was by this time, it would appear, a sannyāsi, that is, one who, being enlightened, has renounced the world, and so "overcomes hunger, thirst, sorrow, passion, old age and death."[1] It is permitted to such a one, who has already, though his feet may stay here, passed beyond the world's illusions and entanglements, to anticipate the inevitable end by drowning himself in a sacred tank or river. Old Marāṭhī legend tells of how the sannyāsi parents of four famous sages, in circumstances not unlike, in some respects, those of the parents of these three children, took this same path from a world where they were treated as outcastes. What Jñāneśwar and Muktābāī's father and mother had done six centuries before, Anant Śāstri might do in his more dire distress. So with this resolve he took leave of the members of his family, and last of all of Ramābāī. "I shall never forget," she writes, "his last injunctions to me. His blind eyes could not see my face, but he held me tight in his arms, and, stroking my head and cheeks, he told me in a few words, broken with emotion, to remember how he loved me and

[1] *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, III. 5, 1.

how he taught me to do right and never depart from the way of righteousness. His last loving command to me was to live an honourable life, if I lived at all, and serve God all my life. He did not know the only true God, but served the—to him—unknown God with all his heart and strength, and he was very desirous that his children should serve Him to the last."[1] He concluded what he meant to be, as we may reckon, his dying message to this daughter of his heart with these words, which she, we may be sure, did not forget, and has given to us in the Marāṭhī language in which he spoke them, "Child, I am now leaving you, but remember always how much I loved you. Follow only after that which is true, that which abides, that which is in accordance with religion. If you should survive, then always continue in the path of God, always make it your aim to serve God. As you are the last of my children, so you are of all the dearest to me. I have given you into God's keeping, He will guard you. He alone is your Lord and you must always serve Him."[2] Surely no words of farewell were ever more treasured and fulfilled; surely no greater faith than this Hindu seeker's can we find — no, not in Christendom. But the last hour had not yet come. He was persuaded by his son to continue the struggle yet awhile. Ramābāī's story goes on—"It took us nearly two days to come out of the forest into a village at the foot of the mountain. Father suffered intensely throughout this time. Weakness, caused by starvation and the hardships of the life in the wilderness, hastened his death. We reached the village with great difficulty and took shelter in a temple, but the Brāhman priests of the temple

[1] *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, the Australasian Edition of *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, edited by Manoramābāī, p. 9.

[2] D. G. Vaidya, op. cit., p. 10.

would not let us stay there. They had no pity for the weak and helpless. So we were obliged again to move from the temple and go out of the village into the ruins of an old temple, where no one but the wild animals dwelt in the night. There we stayed for four days. A young Brāhman, seeing the helplessness of our situation, gave us some food."[1]

Presently the desired end came, and the old man was set free. The story of what followed must be told in Ramābāī's own words. "The same kind young Brāhman who had given us some food came to our help at that time. He could not do much. He was not sure whether we were Brāhmans or not, and as none of his co-villagers would come to carry the dead, he could not—for fear of being put out of caste — come to help my brother to carry the remains of my father. But he had the kindness to let some men dig a grave at his own expense, and follow the funeral party as far as the river. Father had entered the order of a sannyāsin before his death, so his body was to be buried in the ground, according to the commands of the Śāstras.[2] As there was no one else who could help to carry the dead, my brother tied the body in his *dhoti*[3] and carried it alone, over two miles, to its last resting-place. We sadly followed to the river-bank and helped him a little. So we buried my father outside that village, away from all human habitation, and returned with heavy hearts to the ruins of the temple."[4]

It was not long until her mother, although she was much younger than her husband, followed him along the

[1] *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, Australasian Edition, p. 11.
[2] Not burned, as is the usual custom with Hindus.
[3] A garment worn by Indian men.
[4] *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, Australasian Edition, p. 12.

way of the dead, worn out with many privations. They had travelled north, as far as Raichur, but there their mother's strength finally failed her. "Now and then kind people gave us food. My mother suffered intensely from fever and hunger. We, too, suffered from hunger and weakness, but the sufferings of our mother were more than we could bear to see." Ramābāī tells how she begged a piece of *bajri*[1] bread from a Brāhman lady for her mother, but she could not eat it and soon she became unconscious, and a few days later she, too, escaped. In this case, as in their father's, it was with the utmost difficulty that the friendless children disposed of the dead body. "In response to their entreaties, two Brāhmans offered to help to carry the bier, and they, with Ramābāī and her brother, bore the body to the place of its last rites. It was at a distance of three miles, and Ramābāī, being short of stature, had to carry it upon her head. Then the fatherless and motherless children went on further in their journeyings."[2]

The elder sister soon followed her parents, dying, like them, Ramābāī testifies, from the weakness that starvation wrought. The whole tale is one that, to read, wrings the heart. And yet such experience as theirs was far from rare in that land of calamity and of endurance. In the generation that has elapsed since these events happened much has been done to make such suffering impossible, but where poverty is so widespread, and where, therefore, for so many the margin is so narrow between life and death, such incidents are even now not wholly unknown. A Marāṭhā poet-saint of four hundred years ago, whose heart was filled with the same yearnings after

[1] A coarse grain. [2] D. G. Vaidya, op. cit.

God as Anant Śāstri's, describes in poignant verse similar sorrows—his wife dying of hunger and crying, as she died, for food. These tragic experiences made a deep mark on Ramābāī's soul. Lodged in her heart and memory, they became seeds whence sprang in later days help and hope for many who suffered as they had suffered.

Fifteen years later, when Paṇḍitā Ramābāī published her volume on *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, she dedicated it "to the memory of my beloved mother, Laxmībāī Dongre, whose sweet influence and able instruction have been the light and guide of my life." It was not only that she had learned Sanskrit from this mother's lips; she learned from her something more precious and enduring. Sadhu Sundar Singh said to the Archbishop of Canterbury of his "heathen" mother: "If I do not see my mother in heaven I shall ask God to send me to hell, so that I may be with her." Paṇḍitā Ramābāī had, there can be no doubt, a similar feeling in regard to Anant Śāstri and Laxmībāī. She owed them far too much of what was best in herself for it to be possible that she should not always honour them. Their lives, next to her own, deserve to be enshrined as testifying to the strength and ardour in its pursuit of God of the Hindu soul. Manoramābāī, Ramābāī's daughter, spoke in later years of how she desired and hoped, some day, to go on pilgrimage to the places sanctified alike in life and in death by those Hindu grandparents whom she had never seen, but of whom her mother often spoke to her with reverence.

The years of pilgrimage were drawing near their close. The long discipline was soon to be complete, and to give place to the task for which this had been preparing her. For some time more she and her brother wandered on. They journeyed north. "Once on the banks of the Jhelum,

a river in the Panjāb, we were obliged to rest at night in the open air, and tried to keep off the intense cold by digging two grave-like pits and putting ourselves into them, and covering our bodies, except the heads, with dry sand of the river-bank." Still farther north they journeyed with hungry hearts to Kashmir and the Himalayas, "visiting sacred places, bathing in rivers, and worshipping the gods and goddesses in order to get our desires." Everywhere they found deception, unreality, greed. So "after years of fruitless service we began," she said, "to lose our faith in them." They were no longer blind and credulous believers in the traditions of their ancestors when in 1878, turning their backs upon the Himalayas and their mysterious secrets, they came, Ramābāī a young woman of twenty and Śrinivāsa somewhat older, to the city of Calcutta.

III

BENGAL AND ASSAM: 1878–1882

CALCUTTA! It was a different atmosphere they found about them in the capital city from that which they had breathed in Venkatgiri and Dwārkā and Jvālamukhi. Different, but who can say purer? But if Calcutta was the headquarters of many of the evils that for twenty years Ramābāī had lived among, and with ever-quickening conscience had become aware of as evil, it was also the headquarters of a movement of reform that sought to grapple with them and destroy them. It must have been that fact that drew the footsteps of these wanderers to this city. The passion to do something that might help to set their people free had begun to burn in these young hearts. They had seen much and suffered much, and what they had seen and suffered had not hardened their sensibilities or made them indifferent to evils that seemed so widespread and so deep-rooted. Of the faces of pilgrims that he saw at Benares a recent Indian writer says, "They were not faces, but desolate immensities with eyes that had lost all trace of earthly interest."[1] That was not, we may be sure, what the candid, grey eyes of the little, slight, Marāṭhā girl suggested. They had seen far too much of the world's evil, but they did not betray any despair of the world. There was no

[1] Dhan Gopal Mukerji, *My Brother's Face*, p. 75.

weariness or lethargy in her. Her brother, on the other hand, must have begun to show signs of the exhaustion that not only the sufferings they both had to endure, but, in addition, those that he had voluntarily imposed upon himself, had brought upon him. He seems to have been extraordinarily ardent in his quest for the divine favour—fasting, circumambulating shrines countless times, standing in water up to his chest, repeating endless *mantras*.[1] Though now he had turned away from these practices of austerity, they, as well as the privations of the years of famine and of wandering, had undermined his constitution. So we may conjecture that of the two the strongest in purpose, as in the strength of her lithe, young frame, was Ramābāī. They had begun—or perhaps they only began after their coming to Calcutta—to give lectures in Sanskrit which attracted considerable attention.

How this brother and sister, friendless and poor, won their way as they did among the learned Brāhmans of Calcutta we cannot now discover. That they received a welcome and presently conquered general admiration bears witness both to the remarkable character and ability of the young Marāṭhā strangers and to the generosity of their Bengali hosts. Some of the learned paṇḍits with whom Ramābāī became acquainted requested her to lecture to the *purdah* women on the duties of women according to the Śāstras. Whether it was only then that she began to practise the art of lecturing, in which she was to display such skill and charm, we cannot tell. These lectures were, of course, delivered in Sanskrit, and the number of those who could listen to them with understanding must have

[1] Sacred formulæ, supposed to have mystic power.

been small. Probably when she spoke to women her lectures were translated into Bengali.

We must not think of these two young people as now emancipated and free to follow the guidance of their own convictions. The age-old thraldom of such a system as Hinduism cannot be cast off so easily, and especially not by those into whose souls it has been so deeply wrought as it had been into theirs. Two facts marked off Ramābāī at once as different from other Hindu women, and arrested interest or, perhaps, hostility—the fact that she, a young woman of twenty, was unmarried; and the fact that she was learned in Sanskrit lore. These two facts marked her out at once as a transgressor against ancient law and as a dangerous innovator. The earliest Hindu Law-book enjoined "that a girl should be given in marriage before puberty." So also the education of girls was frowned upon, especially their education in Sanskrit, for the more venerable and authoritative scriptures were not allowed to be listened to by the unworthy ears of women and of members of the humbler castes. When Anant Śāstri taught his wife Sanskrit and when Laxmībāī taught her daughter, they each placed in a woman's hand the key to forbidden chambers of knowledge.

There can be no doubt that Anant Śāstri took both these courses deliberately and in the face of much opposition, because he respected women, as orthodox Hinduism did not, and desired their emancipation. He had tried to keep his elder daughter unmarried till she was twenty or twenty-one, but had to yield in her case to the overwhelming pressure of tradition and custom. Her marriage had been unhappy, and that fact, no doubt, strengthened his resolve in the case of her younger sister. It is difficult for us to realize how hard it is for anyone within the Hindu en-

vironment, where collective opinion and inherited custom are so strong and individual initiative and private conviction are reckoned of so little account, to take with firm purpose a solitary road. Anant Śāstri failed in the case of his children Krishṇābāī and Śrinivās, both of whom were married as Hindu convention required. He succeeded, on the other hand, in the matter of his wife Laxmībāī's education and of his daughter Ramābāī's whole upbringing. No one could have succeeded in the circumstances of his time, as he succeeded, who was not possessed of great courage and strength of character. A story has somehow obtained currency to the effect that the reason why Ramābāī remained unmarried was that—in accordance with a custom that is followed in the case of certain Hindu gods—she was dedicated either to Viṭhobā at Paṇḍharpūr or to Kṛishṇa at Dwārkā.[1] But she has herself declared such statements to be wholly false.[2] Such wild statements as these, which were made in regard to her and her father, merely indicate a little of the storm of abuse and calumny that every reformer that has arisen within the Hindu social system has had to face. Dedication, or marriage, of girls to Hindu gods has so inevitably its sequel in a life of prostitution that such practices are now declared to be illegal. This evil custom is chiefly associated with the god Khandobā, and not at all with the gods to whom this story declares her to have been dedicated. Ramābāī repudiates with scorn the idea that her father, who had given up superstition, would have followed such a practice. It has been suggested by Mr. D. G. Vaidya, in his Marāṭhī *Life of Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, that the source of this baseless legend may have been Anant Śāstri's farewell words to his daughter, when

[1] D. G. Vaidya, op. cit., p. 11.

[2] See her article in the *Subodha Patrika*, October 8, 1882.

he said, "I have given you into God's keeping; He alone is your Lord." What was the natural expression of a faith that reached out to a dimly discerned divine Father seemed to those whose religious ideas were of a grosser sort to mean the devotion of his beloved child to the degraded life of a *devadāsi*. Nothing of the kind can for a moment be supposed to have been in his mind; and when Ramābāī went about the towns of Bengal a free-hearted maiden, choosing her own way in life and rendering account to no one but to God, she was what her father had sought to make her. It was not, as she says, that he could not have married her, if he had so desired, for suitors were not wanting, but that his fixed resolve was that his daughter should not be married except by her own choice and to the man of her own choice, nor until she was fully equipped with education.

She gives an account of an incident that happened in this year, 1878, when they were in Calcutta, an incident that is significant of the stage of emancipation from the bondage of tradition which she had reached. She and her brother went to visit the famous theistic reformer, Keshab Chandra Sen. "He received us very kindly, took me into the inner part of the house, and introduced me to his wife and daughters. One of them was just married to the Mahārājā of Cooch Behar, and the Brāhmos and others were criticising him for breaking the rule which was laid down for all Brāhmos, i.e. not to marry or to give girls in marriage under fourteen years of age. He and his family showed great kindness to me, and, when parting, he gave me a copy of one of the Vedas. He asked if I had studied the Vedas. I answered in the negative, and said that women were not fit to read the Vedas and were not allowed to do so. It would be breaking the rules of religion if I

were to study the Vedas. He could not but smile at my declaration of this Hindu doctrine. He said nothing in answer, but advised me to study the Vedas and Upanishads."[1]

"New thoughts," she adds, "were awaking in my heart." We get some glimpses of what these new thoughts were. "The wild, living intellect of men" had not, thanks to her father's courage, been extinguished in her, and it began to have its way. She found two things upon which the Śāstras were agreed, but from which she revolted. One was "that women of high caste and low caste as a class were bad, very bad, worse than demons, as holy as untruth; and that they could not get *moksha*[2] as men [could]. The only hope of their getting this much-desired liberation from *karma* and its results, viz. countless millions of births and deaths and untold suffering, was the worship of their husband." Apparently, as we have seen, this doctrine had troubled her as early as when, a girl of thirteen or fourteen, she had heard at Dwārkā the story of Mirābāī. She looked on Mirābāī as a leader in this rebellion against the tyranny of the husband. "The husband is said to be the woman's god; there is no other god for her." Sister Nivedita, with her skill in idealizing Hinduism, in her book, *The Web of Indian Life*, describes the husband as "the window" through which the woman contemplates the divine. But Ramābāī tears off the veil of sentiment and idealization. "This god," she says, "may be the worst sinner and a great criminal; still he is her god and she must worship him." But even that worship cannot bring to a woman Liberation or Moksha.

[1] *A Testimony*, Part III. The quotations that follow are also from this book.

[2] Liberation.

"The woman had no right to study the Vedas and Vedanta, and without knowing them no one can know the Brahma, without knowing the Brahma no one can get Liberation, therefore no woman as a woman can get Liberation, that is, Moksha." Is there, then, no road at all by which a woman can attain to this supreme boon? The answer to this question is that there is a circuitous route by which she may ultimately attain it. "She must perform such great religious acts as will obtain for her the merit by which she will be reincarnated as a high-caste man." Thus the road will be open, for then she who was once a woman can study, as she could not before, the Vedas and Vedanta. Such are the disabilities, involving enslavement in this life to her husband's will and excluding all hope of attainment to the high goal of Liberation, under which ancient custom and Brāhmanical law had placed the Hindu woman. No wonder a woman of the enlightenment and the free outlook of Ramābāī revolted from it with passion. Thanks to her father's courage, she had not been sold under this bondage. A Buddhist Sister many centuries before had cried out exultingly when she by the road of Buddha obtained her freedom,

> "From quern, from mortar, from her crookbacked lord,"[1]

but the bondage had grown still heavier with the centuries, and Hinduism was more implacable than Buddhism had been. Ramābāī saw about her many women under that often bitter yoke, and hopeless even of the deliverance that absorption into Brahman might afford. The fire of indignation kindled within her heart as she realized the injustice and the cruelty of a system that stripped a woman of her rights as a free personality.

[1] Mrs. Rhys Davids, *Psalms of the Sisters*, p. 15.

That was the one element in the Hinduism that she saw about her against which she was stirred to rebellion. The Śūdras suffered from similar disabilities with women, but it was those who are sometimes nowadays called the Adi-Śūdras whose cruel lot moved her most deeply. These are the outcastes of whom she says that, within Hinduism—

"They have no hope of any sort. They are looked upon as being very like the lower species of animals, such as pigs; their very shadow and the sound of their voices are defiling; they have no place in the abode of the gods, and no hope of getting Liberation, except that they might perchance be born among the higher castes after having gone through millions of reincarnations.

"The things that are necessary to make it possible for them to be born in higher castes are that they should be contented to live in a very degraded condition, serving the high-caste people as their bondservants, eating the leavings of their food in dirty, broken earthen vessels, wearing filthy rags and clothes thrown away from the dead bodies of the high-caste people. They may sometimes get the benefit of coming in contact with the shadow of a Brāhman, and have a few drops of water from his hand or wet clothes thrown at them, and feel the air which has passed over the sacred persons of Brāhmans. These things are beneficial to low-caste people, but the Brāhmans lose much of their own hardly-earned merit by letting the low-caste people get these benefits!

"The low-caste people are never allowed to enter the temples where high-caste men worship gods. So the poor, degraded people find shapeless stones, broken pots, etc., smear them with red paint, set them up under trees and on roadsides, or in small temples which they build themselves where Brāhmans do not go for fear of losing their caste—and worship in order to satisfy the cravings of their spiritual nature. Poor, poor people! How very sad their condition is no one who has not seen can realize. Their quarters are outside every village or town, where the sacred feet of the pious Brāhmans do not walk!"

We must not take this indictment as an impartial account of the relations of those who are accounted "twice-born" in Hinduism with the "depressed" classes as they are called, who are reckoned beyond its pale. We must remember that Ramābāī writes with the moral indignation of the reformer. Her account of the religion of these outcastes upon whom the doors of the Hindu temple are closed is no more than the impression of an indignant observer, all the more indignant and ashamed because she herself belongs to the ranks of the oppressors. No doubt that description, though it claims to present the thoughts stirred within her in the early days of her awakening when she was reading and studying the Śāstras in Calcutta, reflects the deepened feeling of later days when her breach with Hinduism was complete. We have also to remember that she was a pioneer, and her emotions were probably the more violent because she was aware of how few were with her in her crusade, and how helpless she was in setting her feebleness to storm the grim and ancient battlements of Hinduism. Others indeed had been before her, first and greatest of them all, Rājā Rām Mōhan Rāi, who had died half a century earlier, and now the ardent and eloquent Keshab Chandra Sen, whose zeal seemed at this time to be beginning somewhat to flag. But for a woman, especially, the road of reform in India in 1880 was a lonely road. If she felt compelled to be a rebel against the servile fate to which woman was consigned by Hindu custom and enactment, she knew at the same time that to choose freedom meant the rejection of the comforts and protection that the religion of her fathers could supply, of the fellowship and honour and ease that might be hers within its venerable walls.

We can see how these thoughts were troubling her

while she wrestled with the problem of these two unjust enactments of the Śāstras. She says,

"I had a vague idea of these doctrines of the Hindu religion from my childhood, but while studying the Dharma Śāstras they presented themselves to my mind with great force. My eyes were being gradually opened; I was waking up to my own hopeless condition as a woman, and it was becoming clearer and clearer to me that I had no place anywhere, as far as religious consolation was concerned. I became quiet dissatisfied with myself. I wanted more than the Śāstras could give me, but I did not know what it was that I wanted."

It was in this troubled hour that a new calamity came upon her which greatly increased her desolation. Her brother died. They were travelling at the time in Bengal, delivering, apparently, Sanskrit lectures at various centres. They had reached Dacca when, in May, 1880, Śrinivāsa fell ill. The anxieties and hardships he had endured had undermined his health. "His great thought during his illness," his sister tells us,[1] "was for me; what would become of me left alone in the world? When he spoke of his anxiety I answered, 'There is no one but God to care for you and me.' 'Ah,' he answered, 'then if God cares for us I am afraid of nothing.' And indeed in my loneliness it seemed as if God was near me; I felt His presence." So there, in a strange land, among strangers, the last of her near kin was taken from her and she was left to fight her battle alone. Undoubtedly events were compelling her more and more, through her experience of sorrow and of helplessness, to seek a source of strength that had not yet been revealed to her. As Mrs. Rhys Davids says of the Buddhist Sisters of an ancient day, so we can say of her:

[1] Introduction to *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, p. xiv.

"If Freedom drew, not less did Sorrow drive;
'Woeful is woman's lot!' hath he declared—
'Tamer and Driver of the hearts of men.'"[1]

But Ramābāī had still discipline to undergo ere her heart was tamed.

In the two years since she and Śrinivāsa came to Calcutta they had not only had sorrow, but from a little group of admiring sympathizers much honour. These were of two kinds. There were those who, as members of the Brahmo Samāj, sympathized with her efforts to reform abuses within Hinduism, and there were also those who admired and marvelled at the skill that she, a woman, possessed in Sanskrit learning. Both these facts attracted attention to her, though the attention was not always friendly. She tells us herself that two years before her brother's death he and she had definitely abandoned their faith in much that is supposed to be comprised in "Hinduism" and had adopted a theistic faith. This is how, no doubt, she made the acquaintance, as we have seen, of Keshab Chandra Sen, and she tells us that she and her brother were once, during their stay in Calcutta, invited to attend a Christian social gathering. "They shocked us," she says, "by asking us to partake of the refreshments. We thought the Last Age, Kali Yuga, that is, the age of quarrels, darkness and irreligion had fully established its reign in Calcutta, since some of the Brāhmans were so irreligious as to eat food with the English." The worship in which these Christian people joined seemed to them, too, strange and incomprehensible. It is evident that these two young people were as yet only groping their way onward. They had turned away from Hinduism as they saw it about them, and as its

[1] *Psalms of the Sisters*, p. xxvii.

scriptures expounded its injunctions, but as yet their movement was mainly negative. They had, we can see, little that was positive to put in its place. Their religion was as yet little more than an aversion and an aspiration.

What attracted attention to them and won them honour was their learning. This young woman, only about twenty years old, could repeat, it was said, eighteen thousand verses of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, and was acquainted with the amazing intricacies of Sanskrit grammar. She could speak Sanskrit and compose extemporaneous poems in the language. At the same time she was described as "good-looking, ardent, modest." The world of the learned was deeply stirred by her coming. At the Calcutta Senate House three Sanskrit professors, two of them Englishmen, welcomed her as a fellow-savant and chanted her praise in Sanskrit verse. She promptly replied in an extempore poem of acknowledgment. "I am not worthy," she said, "of the praise you have showered upon me. I am only a humble worshipper in your temple of Saraswati.[1] My visit to this city of learning has been crowned by hearing what such learned men said of me."

Such compliments were showered upon her in many places, and it is evident that the pride of many in India was stirred to see one of their own daughters, so long treated as though they belonged to an inferior order, vindicating in her person the capacity of Indian womanhood. The feeling she aroused in Bengal was, no doubt, the same as was expressed shortly afterwards in a Bombay vernacular newspaper. "The patriotic among us," it said, "ought to feel proud that there is, even in our fallen condition, one such among their sisters who would do credit to the female

[1] The goddess of learning.

sex in any country." In her person India was honoured, and thus it was that presently an assembly of Sanskrit scholars in Calcutta gave her the title of "Saraswati." Saraswati is the name of "the divine embodiment of language, literary expression and learning," and it is because she was acclaimed by a "College" of paṇḍits that she was from that time on universally known as Paṇḍitā Ramābāī. In later days such an honour meant nothing at all to her, and her Sanskrit scholarship she accounted as "less than nothing and vanity," but to the end popular usage continued to pay this tribute to a learning which in one so young was certainly amazing. The title marked her as one who in her own person had vindicated the intellectual capacity of the Indian woman from the disparagement from which she so long had suffered.

We read of various occasions when the scholars of Bengal assembled to show her honour. These incidents bear testimony both to their generosity to a friendless stranger, and to the great impression that her personality seems everywhere to have produced. On one of those occasions, at a gathering convened by Mahārājā Jotindra Mōhan Tagore, who belonged to what was then, and is still, one of the most distinguished families of Bengal, we are told, "she was put to various tests. Her remarkable learning, her quickness of wit, her power of repartee and her clear and pure articulation, astonished the entire company." On yet another occasion another notable Bengali leader, Anandmohan Bose, brought together a gathering of women who presented the Paṇḍitā with an address setting forth their admiration of her gifts. It began, "Aryan lady, you are an ornament to this land of Bhārata," and went on to declare that not they alone, but all India was proud of her learning:

"You have demonstrated by your example how greatly the minds of women may be adorned by higher learning. Hitherto the only instances we have had of the learning of modern women have been those of foreigners, but now that we have seen you this is no longer the case. . . . We have read and heard of the famous women of old times, and now we have seen in you their great qualities. Although your ability and learning are so outstanding, we see in you no trace of pride. On the contrary, you appear to be the very embodiment of modesty, meekness, simplicity and goodness. . . . We earnestly trust that henceforth, as a result of the example you have shown of noble qualities and of independence of spirit, our fellow-countrymen will show a disposition to honour aright the women of this land and to give them respect. We must disabuse the men of our land of the idea that freedom can only be the possession of other lands than ours."[1]

It is worth while to give here the greater part of this address, which was presented in their own Bengali language by these ladies of Calcutta to the Marāṭhā woman, who, they felt, was fighting in their cause and lifting the name of the Indian woman from the dust. It is evident that Paṇḍitā Ramābāī had come in an auspicious hour. The placid or stagnant waters had at last been stirred, and from that day to this there have not been lacking those, in Bengal and in Bombay and throughout the whole land, who, realizing that no people, so long as their women lay in bondage, could ever be free or self-reliant, have carried forward—slow enough as has been the progress—the cause of which she was one of the earliest and most ardent champions.

The address was explained to Paṇḍitā Ramābāī by a paṇḍit in Sanskrit, and she replied to it in the same lan-

[1] D. G. Vaidya, op. cit., p. 2.

guage, her reply being subsequently interpreted in Hindi by her brother. Her address was an appeal to her sisters to acquire knowledge, especially the knowledge of Sanskrit, as the key that could unlock their chains and set them free. They would then discover, she pointed out, that in ancient times in India women were educated and had freedom and independence:

"Draupadi used to sit along with her father in full court. She used to urge Yudhishṭhir not to play dice. Śrī Kṛishṇa used to sit in public assembly with his mother beside him. Thus it is evident that it was not the custom in these ancient days to seclude women. . . . Child-marriage has closed up all the roads of knowledge. But as we study the Śāstras we discover that child-marriage was not the custom in ancient times in Bhāratkhand.[1] People say that if child-marriage is not followed, and if women are educated, they will become vicious. But that is not true. Satyabhāmā, Savitri, and many other women prove this to be false."

By such examples from the heroic past of India, Ramābāī sought to provoke her sisters to a noble emulation in the attainment of knowledge and in the emancipation of their land from the bondage of ignorance.

It is evident that her hearers, as they listened, even when what she said was in a strange tongue and had to be interpreted, were deeply stirred, while they watched her eager face and marked her dignity and her quiet courage. The rumour of her attainments spread throughout the land, and when it was realized that this lady who had won the homage of Bengal was a Marāṭhā Brāhman, the eyes of Mahārāshṭra were turned eagerly in her direction. A movement was set on foot to bring her back to her own province and her own Marāṭhā people. It was proposed

[1] India.

that she be invited to come to Bombay to become the head of a school for girls. The tale went abroad that at Dacca she had made a vow to work for the emancipation of women. Accordingly, with good hope of success, some gentlemen from Bombay visited her in that town and placed their proposals before her. According to the account given by her Marāṭhā biographer, Mr. D. G. Vaidya, she actually gave her consent to the proposal, and her visitors returned to Bombay believing this to be the case. Whether the Paṇḍitā had indeed made such a vow as has been indicated but later faltered in her purpose, we cannot say, but events had happened in the May of that year, as we have seen, which may well have daunted even her. Her brother had died and she was left alone and desolate.

It was in these circumstances that she consented to marry a Bengali gentleman, Babu Bipin Beharidās Medhavi. Paṇḍitā Ramābāī makes it quite plain in her own account of her early life that she had not remained unmarried because of lack of opportunities of marriage. Her father, she tells us, had put aside not a few offers for her hand. After his death similar proposals were made to her brother on behalf of various educated and well-to-do persons in good position belonging to Mahārāshṭra, North India, the Central Provinces and Bengal, but, she says, "seeing that as long as my brother was with me I had no cause for anxiety, I refused them all." Some time before her brother's death he and she, on the invitation of the people of Sylhet, in Assam, spent several months in that place. There her brother made the acquaintance of the gentleman whom his sister was later to marry, and the two young men became intimate friends. Very soon this attractive young woman had won the affection of her brother's friend.

When he had repeatedly urged his suit she at last replied that she would follow in the matter her brother's judgment. Soon afterwards the brother and sister went from Sylhet to Dacca, and there she promised, if she obtained her brother's consent, to marry this suitor. Then came her brother's death, and she was left, as she says, "alone in a strange land." "What I felt," she says, "in these circumstances, I, so ignorant of the world and with no one I could call my own, the reader can conceive." Influence was brought to bear upon her to induce her to marry a Mahārāshṭra Brāhman of good position, but Ramābāī had given her promise to the Bengali Śūdra, and in October, six months after her brother's death, she was married to him at Bankipur, near Calcutta. "We neither of us believed," she says, "in Hinduism or Christianity, and so we were married with the civil marriage rites."

Paṇḍitā Ramābāī was inevitably all her life long the object of continual slander and abuse on the part of those who considered her a rebel and a renegade against Hindu belief and Hindu practice. This step that she had now taken was one for which, it was considered, there could be no forgiveness. She had gone far already in revolt against her old faith, but when she, a Chitpāwan Brāhman, married a Śūdra, she put herself definitely beyond the pale. It is not easy for those to whom Hinduism is only a strange and far-off thing to realize of what an outrage she by this marriage was considered guilty. She tells us that it was alleged that she was forced to this step and to her adoption of theistic views, by the fact that a marriage within caste and with a husband in a good position was impossible for her. That she absolutely denies. Her marriage was an act of deliberate choice on her part; it was marriage with one whom she knew well and

honoured; and she had no reason to regret it. But the comfort that had come to her sad heart was not long to be hers; her discipline of sorrow was not yet complete. Her husband was a pleader, a Master of Arts and Bachelor of Law, and he carried on his business as a lawyer in Silchar, in the Cachar district of Assam. In that town she had her brief experience of the protection of a home. "After nineteen months of happy married life," she tells us, "my dear husband died of cholera." There was only one alleviation to this sequence of sorrows. She was left once more alone to face the world, but with a little baby girl to share with her, increasingly as the years went on, her solitude and her struggles. This was Manoramābāī, who came in a sad hour to be to her mother, as her name signifies, "the joy of her heart."

In all these events we can trace the divine discipline of sorrow and of comfort marshalling the footsteps of this traveller along the appointed way. The purpose in it all was not wholly unrealized by Ramābāī herself. "This great grief," she says, "drew me nearer to God. I felt He was teaching me, and that if I was to come to Him He must Himself draw me." To be aware of this and to yield to this drawing was a profoundly significant intuition. And yet another event had happened during that brief married life that was full of the tokens of divine guidance. Her account of it must be given in her own words. She says:

"While living with my husband at Silchar, Assam, I had found a little pamphlet in my library. I do not know how it came there, but I picked it up and began to read it with great interest. It was St. Luke's Gospel in the Bengali language.

"There lived a Baptist missionary, Mr. Allen, at Silchar. He occasionally paid visits to me and preached

the Gospel. He explained the first chapter of the Book of Genesis to me. The story of the creation of the world was so very unlike all the stories which I had read in the Purāṇas and Śāstras, that I became greatly interested in it. It struck me as being a true story, but I could not give any reason for thinking so or believing in it.

"As I lost all faith in my former religion and my heart was hungering after something better, I eagerly learned everything which I could about the Christian religion, and declared my intention to become a Christian if I were perfectly satisfied with this new religion. My husband, who had studied in a mission school, was pretty well acquainted with the Bible, but did not like to be called a Christian. Much less did he like the idea of his wife being publicly baptized and joining the despised Christian community. He was very angry, and said he would tell Mr. Allen not to come to our house any more. I do not know just what would have happened had he lived much longer."[1]

This was not absolutely the first contact of the Paṇḍitā with Christianity. Two or three years before, a copy of the Bible in Sanskrit had been given to her in Calcutta by some Christians, but she could make little of it, its style and language were so different from that of the Sanskrit literature she had hitherto studied. "I thought it quite a waste of time," she says, "to read that book; but I have never parted with it since then." Now, however, she could read this "little pamphlet" with more understanding. The Sanskrit language, with all its associations so alien to the simplicity of the Gospel story, did not come as a barrier between her and what she read. And, besides, she was prepared now to receive its message as she had not been then; her heart in these years had been deeply harrowed. "I was desperately in need of some religion," she says. The

[1] *A Testimony*, Part IV.

Hindu religion held no hope for me; the Brahmo religion was not a very definite one. For it is nothing but what a man makes for himself. He chooses and gathers whatever seems good to him from all religions known to him, and prepares a sort of religion for his own use. The Brahmo religion has no other foundation than man's own natural light and the sense of right and wrong which he possesses in common with all mankind. It could not, and did not, satisfy me; still I liked and believed a good deal of it that was better than what the orthodox Hindu religion taught."

"My heart was hungering after something better." "I was desperately in need of some religion." These are waymarks on the road to God, and step by step, drawn by divinely kindled desire and driven by the divine discipline of sorrow, she makes her way towards the goal. She does not reach it in a sudden rapture; her reason has to be illuminated, her hunger satisfied. Hinduism, whatever else it is, is no shallow doctrine; the desires of the Hindu heart are no fickle, rootless things. Paṇḍitā Rāmābāī had not yet found the place of fulfilment of craving, but she had caught some glimpse of it, and henceforth, we may believe, her eyes were never wholly turned away from it nor her heart wholly blind to it.

"By this time," she writes, "all my relatives—in the Karnatak, in Mahārāshṭra, and in Assam—had by the will of God been taken from me. There was no reason now why I should remain longer in that part of the country. Accordingly I made up my mind to go to Madras and there to study the English language. But when I went there and found that the language the people spoke was wholly strange to me, I resolved to return to Mahārāshṭra." So in 1882 she came with her little girl to Poona.

IV

POONA, ENGLAND, AMERICA: 1882-1888

WITH this hunger hidden in her heart, Paṇḍitā Ramābāī came to Poona, the capital city of Mahārāshṭra, the headquarters, one might say, of the Chitpāwan Brāhmans. If she wished to do battle for woman's freedom, or if she wished to come face to face with Hinduism in all the pride of its strength, then Poona, the city where her father had lived in the last days of the Marāṭhā empire, had been rightly chosen by her. The fort of Sinha Gaḍh, whence Śivājī had sallied forth on his fierce forays in old days, looked down upon the city and wakened in its people proud memories of the greatness of the past. Since conquests such as these were no longer theirs, they had turned to other tasks and already in that year plans that were to result in great educational institutions were taking shape in some visionary hearts. But because they were Marāṭhās and Chitpāwans who saw these visions, they did not remain visions but soon assumed concrete form and substance. There were two notable figures at this date in Poona, each representing opposing movements of thought and purpose, each destined in years to come to be yet more powerful in the influence, for evil or for good, that he was to exercise upon his country's destiny. The one of these was Bāl Gangādhar Ṭiḷak, then a young man newly entered upon his journalistic career, one day to be reckoned the symbol and embodiment of a fateful alliance

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between political nationalism and Hindu orthodoxy. The other was Mahādev Govind Rānaḍe, at that time a subordinate judge in Poona, the cautious, able, far-seeing leader in social and religious reform. It was not long till Paṇḍitā Ramābāī was the storm centre about which angry passions surged, the emblem of all that the one group hated and feared, and that to the other was their country's only hope.

But Ramābāī, when she came again to the city after such wanderings and sorrows, had no thought save of living quietly and learning English. She already knew three or four languages, but English she did not know, and her thirst for knowledge could not be satisfied until she knew it also. But a quiet life was not to be her lot. Her fame had preceded her and she had already, as we have seen, been invited to come to Bombay and lend her aid to the cause of women's education. With the news that this champion of progress or of revolt was in Poona the smouldering fires of controversy at once flamed fiercely up. One account, from a source by no means friendly, describes the division of opinion that this young woman aroused in those among whom she had come, with her eager nature, her youthfulness, her learning, and her widowhood:

"To reformers like Rānaḍe, it seemed that the cause of women's education had gained in her a supreme treasure. It is not surprising, on the other hand, that by those who held by orthodox opinion she was viewed as one who was drawing destruction down upon society. The reformers took note of Ramābāī's ability and social service, whereas the old-fashioned people admitted indeed that she seemed a good woman, but wondered how she would turn out. When Rānaḍe looked at her his thoughts turned, no doubt, to the women of the Upanishads; but in the case of orthodox scholars of the old ways of thinking, the sight of her

brought to their lips the Sanskrit verse: 'Untruth, violence, deceit.'"

The writer goes on to say that those that met her face to face were so impressed by her that criticism was silenced, "but in gatherings of idlers and busybodies her strange history furnished abundant material for gossip."[1]

Another description of the stir that the Paṇḍitā's coming to Poona produced is given by one who then made her acquaintance for the first time, but who from this time on till her death—throughout all vicissitudes—continued to call her friend. This was another Ramābāī, the young second wife of Mahādev Govind Rānaḍe, who in these days was learning at the feet of her revered husband lessons that she was to put to noble use in the service of her sisters in days to come. She tells of the eager expectation with which she and others awaited the arrival in their city of the much talked of stranger. She gives some specimens of the ill-natured gossip that went abroad in regard to her:

"Outcaste woman that she is, she must not come into our house and defile it. You, if you like, can hug her to your bosom, but such pollution is intolerable to us. The horrid creature, when her father had duly and properly married her to Śrī Kṛishṇa at Dwārkā, must needs commit sacrilege and marry a Bengali Babu. And does she then keep at home? Not she: she brings ruin there also; and now she comes here, intent on spreading her unholy influence over the whole world."[2]

It was amid such storms of censure that Paṇḍitā Ramābāī arrived in the city where she hoped to find a haven. She found, indeed, true friends there, and almost immediately she gave a "Purāṇa" in Mr. Rānaḍe's house,

[1] N. C. Kelkar, *B. G. Ṭiḷak*, pp. 315, 316.
[2] Mrs. Ramābāī Rānaḍe, *Āṭhvaṇī*, p. 104.

and wherever these discourses were delivered week by week the Judge and his wife were sure to be in her audience. She also founded a Society or Club for Indian ladies, called the "Ārya Mahilā Samāj," which met each Saturday. Mrs. Ramābāī Rānaḍe had had a similar gathering before she came which was absorbed into this new one, and the magic of the Paṇḍitā's attractive personality drew many more than had formerly been the case. Here is Mrs. Ramābāī Rānaḍe's account of the Paṇḍitā as a speaker:

"The sweet and musical flow of her speech and the manner in which she presented her subject were alike admirable. In addition, she had amazing skill in winning the hearts of her hearers for whatever she had to say. The result was that every educated person, young and old, in the city who desired to learn was filled with pride and admiration."[1]

This Ārya Mahilā Samāj set before it as its chief aims: "(1) to work for the deliverance of women from the evil practices (e.g. child-marriage, the bondage of ignorance, etc.) which by tradition and custom have come down to India from the past; and (2) to work for the removal of the present deplorable condition of women in respect of religion, morality, etc., and for their uplift." The Society was meant to form the centre from which might issue a powerful agitation for the emancipation of the enslaved women of the land. The Paṇḍitā was full of ardour and of passion in this cause, and as she went from city to city of the Presidency, seeking to establish branches of the Samāj, she certainly stirred deep interest and aroused many, at least for a brief space, from their indifference. But the grey walls of Hindu custom had resisted many an assault by

[1] Mrs. Ramābāī Rānaḍe, op. cit., p. 106.

spirits eager as she throughout the centuries. We can read, perhaps, her sense of her helplessness in the strong language she sometimes makes use of. "Men look on us women as chattels: we make every effort to deliver ourselves from this situation. But some will say that this is a rebellion against man, and that to do this is sin. To leave men's evil acts unrebuked and remain unmoved before them is a great sin."[1] No great injustice, no abuse deeply entrenched in human selfishness has ever been overthrown without passionate and deep conviction. Martin Luther did not speak smooth words of the Papacy in his day. "I am in the Pope's hair," he said, "and he in mine." It needed no less intensity and a no less eager onslaught if these ancient ills were to be rooted out of Hindu life. Mahādev Govind Rānaḍe, incarnating in himself the Hindu spirit of tolerance—so often, in the case of others, only a synonym for indifference—and the Hindu spirit of patient endurance, watched, with silent interest, and, it is evident, with admiration, these outspoken, fearless denunciations. But the Paṇḍitā, it is manifest, soon realized that she was not sufficient for these things. The task was beyond her strength. She had the sympathy of the finest spirits of the time—Rānaḍe, Bhāndārkar—but the principalities and powers ranged in opposition were far more numerous and far more strong. So feelings and longings, that perhaps for a while had been submerged beneath the tide of new activities, began again to surge up within her. Her thoughts turned back again to the great Ally of whom before she had felt so much her need: she turned again to God.

The difficulty that she had in remaining patient and restrained in the presence of the evils from which she saw

[1] Report of lecture in *Subodha Patrika*, June 4, 1882.

her sisters suffering is evident from her evidence before the Education Commission in 1883. This Commission had been appointed by Lord Ripon's Government to investigate the condition and prospects of education on its lower levels, and no question that came before it was more important than that of the needs of women and girls. The only school that existed at that date in Poona for the more advanced education of girls was the Female Training College, an institution which for a number of years had been doing valuable work in the training of women teachers. There was as yet no high school for girls in the city.

Paṇḍitā Rāmābāī a few years later printed a plain and sufficiently appalling statement of the facts in regard to the education of girls at that time in India. "Of the ninety-nine million, seven hundred thousand women and girls directly under British rule, ninety-nine and one half millions are returned" (in the Census of 1881) "as unable to read or write: the remaining two hundred thousand, who are able either to read or write, cannot all be reckoned as educated, for the school-going period of a girl is generally between seven and nine years of age; within that short time she acquires little more than ability to read the second or third vernacular reading-book and a little knowledge of arithmetic, which usually comprehends no more than the four simple rules."[1] These plain facts, which she realized so vividly against the background of stubborn and fanatical opposition to women's advancement in enlightenment, were ever before Paṇḍitā Rāmābāī's imagination, and she saw their consequences in the whole nation's degradation. Who can deny the name of a true patriot to one whose heart burned within her as she became aware of such

[1] *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, p. 102.

things? "Ignorant, unpatriotic, selfish and uncultivated," she said, "they drag men down with them into the dark abyss where they dwell together without hope, without ambition to be something or to do something in the world."[1]

It was with these convictions in her soul that Paṇḍitā Ramābāī gave her evidence before the Education Commission, of which Sir W. W. Hunter was Chairman. She as yet knew little English, but she was the chosen representative of the women's cause, both at a women's meeting convened by the Ārya Mahilā Samāj to welcome the Commission, and in her examination before the Commission itself. Her answers so impressed the Chairman of the Commission that he had them translated and drew public attention to them. The Paṇḍitā described herself as one who, as "the child of a man who had to suffer a great deal on account of advocating female education," considered it her duty, "to the very end of her life, to maintain this cause." Her account of the hindrances that had to be overcome if such education were to advance gives no quarter to the selfish and hostile male. She said:

"In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the educated men of this country are opposed to female education and the proper position of women. If they observe the slightest fault, they magnify the grain of mustard seed into a mountain and try to ruin the character of a woman; often the poor woman not being very courageous and well-informed, her character is completely broken. Men being more able to reach the authorities are believed, while women go to the wall. . . . It is evident that women, being one half of the people of this country, are oppressed and cruelly treated by the other half."

[1] Op. cit., p. 105.

These are strong and sweeping statements, but Paṇḍitā Rāmābāī had a right to make them. She knew the facts and she had the courage to make them public without any abatement. If she seemed to forget sometimes that there were men that supported this cause as wholeheartedly, if seldom as outspokenly, as herself, it was because the cause to which she had given herself possessed her, and she forgot all else but it. All through her life her singleness of purpose and her surrender of herself to the dominion of her convictions were her strength, and made her so powerful a weapon in the Divine grasp.

Her plea for women physicians, to tend the sick in a land where women are timid by nature and have been rendered so much more so by tradition and convention, is said to have been the immediate cause, through the impression made by her evidence upon Queen Victoria, of an important movement that has been carried on ever since for the purpose of supplying medical assistance to women. The Countess of Dufferin inaugurated this effort when, in 1885, her husband was Viceroy, and Dufferin Hospitals from that day to this have been doing not a little to supply a need that seems almost limitless.

We can see that during this short year in Poona, Paṇḍitā Rāmābāī was measuring on the one hand the need of the women of her country, and on the other the resources that were available to supply that need. She soon realized that for so great a task she required all the help and all the training that it was possible for her to obtain.

What thoughts were stirring within her she tells us in a paper written many years afterwards. She tells how, in 1882, a Brāhman girl-widow of about twelve years of age was brought to her. "She was very dark, had cross eyes, and was very unattractive in many ways. . . . She was

given in marriage when five years old, but the boy husband died a few days after the marriage ceremony was performed. Her mother-in-law would not look at her. She said the girl had eaten up her son and was a great demon." The Paṇḍitā had compassion on her, and took her to live with her till she left for England. She goes on:

"As I looked on that little figure my vague thoughts about doing something for my sisters in similar conditions began to take shape. . . . I began to place a plan for starting a Home for Hindu widows before my countrymen and to ask for their help. For six months or more I tried my best to get help, but could not. Then the thought came to me that I had better get a medical education and then do what I could to help widows. With that purpose I made up my mind to go to England, if the way opened for me. The unknown God, who was directing my steps toward the way of life, made it possible for me to carry out the purpose which He had put into my heart."[1]

Her religious longings and her sense of her need of further knowledge and study, if she was to accomplish what she aimed at for the education of women, united to impel her to a great adventure. She had continued in Poona her study of the New Testament, begun in Assam. Miss Hurford, whom she describes as "a missionary working in connection with the High Church," that is, the Mission carried on by the Wantage Sisters and Cowley Fathers (the Society of St. John the Evangelist) at Pāñch Howds, in Poona City, was her instructor. Miss Hurford seems to have been the Superintendent of the Female Training College in Poona.[2] But the Paṇḍitā was fortunate

[1] *Mukti Prayer Bell*, September, 1907.

[2] Apparently, Miss Hurford was at first an educational worker in connection with the Pāñch Howds Mission, but later, when the post of superintendent of the Female Training College became vacant, it seemed right that she should accept it.

in having another guide as well. This was Rev. Nilkant Nehemiah Goreh, who, like herself, a Chitpāwan Brāhman, had, thirty-four years earlier, entered the Christian Church. He was also, like her, a Sanskrit scholar, and he had carefully studied and compared the Hindu and the Christian systems. "I profited much," she says, "by his teaching." It is evident, however, that she was not yet fully convinced of the truth of this faith that had begun to lay its hold upon her. She even is said at this time to have declared, in a letter in one of the vernacular newspapers, that nothing would induce her to embrace Christianity.[1] There must, indeed, have been a grim struggle within her throughout all this time. She had able and generous friends among the leaders of the Theistic and the Social Reform movement. Her roots were deep planted in Hindu thought, and the lifework to which she had given herself was such as may well have seemed to her to require that she remain within the Hindu social order. But she was not a woman who would long let "I dare not" wait upon "I would." She had set her feet on a road from which she could not turn aside. "I felt a restless desire," she says, "to go to England. I could not have done this unless I had felt that my faith in God had become strong: it is such a great step for a Hindu woman to cross the sea: one cuts one's self always off from one's people. But the voice came to me as to Abraham. . . . It seems to me now very strange how I could have started as I did, with my friend and little child, throwing myself on God's protection. I went forth as Abraham, not knowing whither I went."[2]

The great adventure of the voyage not only required courage, such as this stout-hearted woman seldom lacked,

[1] C. E. Gardner, *Life of Father Goreh*, p. 275.

[2] *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, p. xviii.

but also money, of which she had little enough at any time. She had, however, gained by this time, to a considerable extent, the attention, whether they agreed with her views or not, of the public of Mahārāshṭra. Accordingly, in furtherance both of her public aims and her private purposes, she published a little Marāṭhī volume with the title *Strīdharma Nīti*, that is, "Morals for Women." It was meant to supply the need, which she felt to be urgent, of a simple guide for women as to their duties in the ordinary life of every day. She could find no book suitable for her purpose and so felt constrained to supply the lack herself, though she has to apologise for the fact that the book is written with "an unquiet mind." It conveys, in simple and attractive language, her sense of the urgent need that women in her land should arouse themselves to effort if they are to make any progress, and it gives practical advice as to how a woman may cultivate her mind, her character, her religious nature. The duties of a wife to her husband, in the management of her household, in bringing up her children, are set forth, and it is to be noted that there is no indication here that she is the leader in a revolt against husband-tyranny. She has severe enough things to say of her country and of the faults that hinder its advance. "No spirit of daring, no ardour, no enterprise, no self-reliance, no anything—it is all No, no, no." That sentence reveals what she felt to be so lacking in her people—qualities without which she felt there could be no progress, qualities which, it may be added, she herself undoubtedly possessed.

The little book has been long out of print: its message is by no means superfluous in India today, but the Paṇḍitā felt, no doubt, that when she wrote it she had not discovered the way that she later found to the recovery of her people's

lost manhood. So she never cared to reissue it, nor yet any other of the publications of her pre-Christian days. It apparently fulfilled its double purpose: it helped in some measure in arousing women's slumbering spirits; and it helped in enabling its author to set out on her new pilgrimage.

"When I first landed in England," she tells us (this was early in 1883), "I was met by the kind Sisters of Wantage, to one of whom I had been introduced by Miss Hurford, of St. Mary's Home, in Poona. The Sisters took me to their Home, and one of them, who became my spiritual mother, began to teach me both secular and religious subjects. I owe an everlasting debt of gratitude to her and to Miss Beale, the late Lady Principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College. Both of these ladies took great pains with me, and taught me the subjects that would help me in my life. The instruction that I received from them was mostly spiritual. Their motherly kindness and deeply spiritual influence have greatly helped the building up of my character. I praise and thank God for permitting me to be under the loving Christian care of these ladies.

The Paṇḍitā while in Poona had come to know, as we have seen, some members of the Church of England Mission which had its headquarters at Pāñch Howds in that city. It was natural, therefore, and it was fortunate for her, that when she reached England she found among the Sisters of the Community of St. Mary the Virgin, at Wantage, friends waiting to welcome her and to show her every kindness. The "spiritual mother" to whom she refers above was, apparently, Sister Geraldine, who was one of the witnesses when she took the step of confessing her faith by baptism. She was helped to this decision not only by the friendship and instruction received in Wantage, but

by a letter sent from India to her by Father Goreh. Of this message she wrote in a letter to a friend: "His humble, sweet voice has pierced my heart. I think no one would have had the power of turning me from the Brāhman religion but Father Goreh."[1] There were other influences as well that had their share in convincing her. She gives some account of these in her *Testimony*. She tells there how greatly she was impressed by the rescue work carried on in connection with one of the branches of the Sisters' Home in London:

"Here, for the first time in my life, I came to know that something should be done to reclaim the so-called fallen women, and that Christians, whom Hindus considered outcasts and cruel, were kind to these unfortunate women, degraded in the eyes of society. I had never heard or seen anything of the kind done for this class of women by the Hindus in my own country. . . .

"After my visit to the Homes at Fulham, where I saw the works of mercy carried on by the Sisters of the Cross, I began to think that there was a real difference between Hinduism and Christianity. I asked the Sister who instructed me what it was that made the Christians care for, and reclaim, the 'fallen women.' She read me the story of Christ meeting the Samaritan woman, and His wonderful discourse on the nature of true worship, and explained it to me. She spoke of the infinitive love of Christ for sinners. He did not despise them, but came to save them. I realized, after reading the fourth chapter of St. John's Gospel, that Christ was truly the Divine Saviour He claimed to be, and no one but He could transform and uplift the downtrodden womanhood of India and of every land.

"Thus my heart was drawn to the religion of Christ. I was intellectually convinced of its truth on reading a book written by Father Goreh, and was baptized in the Church of

[1] Gardner's *Life of Nehemiah Goreh*, p. 275.

England, in the latter part of 1883, while living with the Sisters at Wantage. I was comparatively happy, and felt a great joy in finding a new religion which was better than any other religion I had known before. I knew full well that it would displease my friends and my countrymen very much; but I have never regretted having taken the step. I was hungry for something better than what the Hindu Śāstras gave. I found it in the Christian Bible and was satisfied."

That is the Paṇḍitā's own account of this momentous event in her history. It had been approached by a slow and continuous process of growing intellectual conviction, accompanied at the same time by the sense, as she expressed it, that "she was desperately in need of some religion." She had found the better; she did not yet realize that she had found the best. She had yet discoveries to make. The actual date of her baptism was the 29th of September, 1883. She was baptized in the Wantage Parish Church by Canon Butler, the founder of the Community of St. Mary the Virgin. Her daughter was baptized with her. After a year spent in the study of English at Wantage she was able to proceed to Cheltenham, where, in September, 1884, she joined the Women's College both as a student and as a teacher. She taught Sanskrit, and herself studied mathematics, science and English literature. It was here that she came under the influence of Miss Beale, of whom, as we have seen, she speaks with much gratitude. "Those who attended Miss Beale's Saturday Scripture lesson," we are told, "will have a vivid recollection of her (Paṇḍitā Rāmābāī) sitting close to the Principal, and following with rapt attention, for Miss Beale's philosophical treatment of the Christian mysteries appealed to her." It was, we are told, the first eight verses of the first chapter of the Gospel of St. John that formed the subject

of study. Ramābāī was already troubled with deafness, which became with later years an increasing infliction, and so "she always sat beside Miss Beale during the lectures, on a high stool, with her aurophone touching her teeth." A lady who was at that time in the college gives us a hint of the spiritual conflicts through which this student "in the white sāri" was passing. She describes her as coming joyfully to Miss Beale, to tell her of faith restored after her mind had become clouded with religious doubt. She had gone away to fight her battle by herself and had returned to announce her victory.

The next stage in her career was her visit to America. She went there in February, 1886, taking with her the little Manoramā, who was then four and a half years old. Before she was five years old she was back again, however, among kind friends, who watched over her till her return to India in 1888. All this time her mother was in America finding there full scope for her growing powers, and winning also in that land a generous response to her appeals for help in the plans that had now begun to assume clearer outline in her mind. The immediate cause of her journey across the Atlantic was an invitation that came to her to be present at the graduation in medicine of a lady, a Marāṭhā Brāhman like herself, Mrs. Anandibāī Joshi, who had just completed her studies at Philadelphia. She was the first Hindu woman to obtain in any country the degree of Doctor of Medicine, but within a year of obtaining it she died at Poona. It is to her memory—as well as to that of her own mother—that the Paṇḍitā dedicated her book on *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, which she published in 1887, while she was in America.

Like so many others, Mrs. Anandibāī Joshi seems

to have recognized at once in Paṇḍitā Rāmābāī the champion of oppressed Indian womanhood, and to have been filled with admiration and pride in her achievements. She had never seen her, but she desired intensely that she should come to Philadelphia and be present at her graduation. In March, 1886, they met, and of her new friend Mrs. Joshi writes: "This lady is delicate and flowerlike, and for that reason she appears somewhat timid. And yet by her courage she has caused great *yogīs* to quail before her. It is a great joy to me that she has confirmed the previous idea that I had of her. I long hoped to have this joy, and now at last we have met."

The Paṇḍitā remained for over two years in America. It appears from her own statement that she had had hopes of studying medicine when in the West,[1] but that did not prove possible. How she was occupied during these two years is thus described in the *Quarterly Mission Paper* of the Wantage Sisters (1888): "She first set herself to learn Froebel's system of Kindergarten, and prepared, in hours not devoted to school work, a series of reading books for vernacular schools." As she had, by her Marāṭhī book, *Strīdharma Nīti*, found the cost of her voyage to England, so now, to meet the expense of the publication of these school books, she issued her first English book, which, we are told, "thrilled the hearts of the American women." This was her *High Caste Hindu Woman*, and, as an immediate result of the impression it produced in America, on December 13th, 1887, the Rāmābāī Association was formed in Boston, "with the object of giving education to high-caste

[1] Letter quoted in the *Quarterly Mission Paper* of C.S.M.V. (1888), p. 14.

child-widows of India."[1] She had now achieved, by the irresistible power of her personality, the purpose for which she had come so far. The faith and courage that had sent her forth were justified. She could repay to her friends in Wantage, as far as money could, the generous kindness they had shown to her and her little girl, when these two strangers from India first came among them. She insisted now on doing so, but, she added, "the debt of love and kindness I owe you can never be repaid." The transformation of her prospects that had now come about was not, indeed—generous and immediate as was the response of England and America to her appeal—a result that could be achieved without much resolute toil on her own part. She travelled, we are told, "thousands of miles, lecturing all up and down the States and also in Canada."[2] But the result was that when, in November, 1888, she sailed for India from San Francisco, she was "no longer a poor, friendless, homeless widow, but a leader, supported by hundreds—no, by thousands—of sympathetic hearts in England and America."[3]

The conquest of the sympathy of these Western lands was achieved in large measure through the attention that was attracted to the sorrows of the high-caste Hindu widow by the book above referred to. By its publication—to quote the opening words of the Introduction—"the silence of a thousand years was broken." America, especially, knew little in these days of the complex civilization of Hinduism. The Parliament of Religions of Chicago had not yet been held; Swamī Vivekānanda had not yet landed on its shores. The story accordingly that Paṇḍitā Ramābāī, in her book

[1] Miss Butler, *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī* (*Saraswati*), p. 20.
[2] *Quarterly Mission Paper*, 1888–89.
[3] Miss Butler, op. cit., p. 14.

and by her lectures, told the American people was one that found a way at once to their sympathetic hearts. Dr. Rachel L. Bodley, Dean of the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania, who introduces the book and its author to its American readers, writes, she says, "with deep emotion." She goes on, "The blinding tears which fall upon the page are the saddest tears my eyes have ever wept." The story has been often told since then, and hearts are less quickly moved today by what has become to so many a familiar tale. Also the generation that has passed since that date has seen a re-awakening in that matter of the Indian conscience. A public opinion has arisen that condemns many of the hideous evils that Paṇḍitā Ramābāī saw about her and that made her heart hot with indignation. In the place where she stood thirty-seven years ago, almost alone, many enlightened Hindu women, inspired by her ideals, now stand. In one of her passionate indictments of her countrymen she says, "Thousands upon thousands of young widows and innocent children are suffering untold misery and dying helpless every year throughout this land, but not a philosopher nor a Mahātmā has come out boldly to champion their cause and to help them."[1] Perhaps even then to say that was not wholly just; it would certainly be altogether unjust today. But, in 1888, there was need of strong words, even harsh words, and Paṇḍitā Ramābāī spoke as one who knew and who was not afraid. In one of her letters she tells of an experience of her childhood, when she lived with her parents on the banks of the Jumnā. She, a child of nine, was the witness of the brutal ill-treatment of a young wife by her husband and her mother-in-law. "Her cries," she says, "went right to my heart, and I seem to hear them now after nearly thirty

[1] *Quarterly Mission Paper* of C.S.M.V., 1896.

years. . . . I suppose that was the first call I received to enter upon the sacred duty of helping my sisters according to the little strength that I had."[1] It was a scene such as any other land, as well as India, might have presented, but it was to her a symbol of the tyranny under which for so many centuries the women of her land had lain.

Professor Max Müller, who knew and admired the Paṇḍitā, in an address at an Oriental Congress at Christiania, coupled her name with that of Rām Mōhan Rāi as one of the pioneers in Indian reform. Rājā Rām Mōhan Rāi had fought for the abolition of *sati* with the same courage with which Ramābāī fought, nearly a century later, against similar cruelties inflicted upon Hindu widows, nor did he use smooth words any more than she. They had to awaken the conscience of the land. *The High Caste Hindu Woman* is not the work of an enemy of her people, but of one who loves them too much to flatter them. "Yes, they are my brethren," she would say with Carlyle: "hence this rage and sorrow." And so her burning heart set on fire many other hearts in America and in England. When she sailed homeward from San Francisco she had the assurance that all the funds necessary would be supplied for the establishment of a school for high-caste Hindu widows, and for its maintenance for at least ten years.

There can be no doubt that not only did she make a remarkable impression on America, but what she saw there produced a deep and permanent effect upon her own mind. She had come as a representative of one of the oldest civilizations of the world, but of a civilization burdened and wearied with its own antiquity, and she found herself in the midst of a people, buoyant and

[1] *Quarterly Mission Paper*, 1896.

exuberant with the consciousness of youth and of the freedom and the hope of youth. The experience must have reinforced all the eagerness of rebellion that was pent up within her. She had fled from her own land, we can see, almost in despair. It had scarcely begun as yet to stir from the slumber of milleniums. Its lethargy and torpor seemed to her invincible, for she had not yet fully won for herself the Great Ally to whom she was able, later, to entrust, unafraid, the issues of the conflict. We can see how in these circumstances America reinforced and quickened all her aspirations. There was no languor in her nature, child though she was of so ancient a people. In her, indeed, one might say, India had been born young again, and she greeted in the people of the New World a kindred ardour to her own. The links with America that she forged during these years were never through all her life to be broken. Paṇḍitā Ramābāī was, as one of her race should be, "a friend of all the world," and England had, we may claim, after her own land, her most loyal affection. But to America she owed, from this time on, an ever-renewed debt for help and comradeship, and the beginning of that debt was when her young heart greeted in this land of youth the very spirit itself of hope of which she was in quest.

How her heart burned within her when she looked across the seas to her sisters, still so ignorant and still bound in such a bondage, we can judge from the two books which her sojourn in these Western lands produced. The one was published specially to kindle in the hearts of her new friends the flame that burned, "lone as some volcanic isle," within herself. This book, to which reference has been made already, her *High Caste Hindu Woman*, is a passionate indictment of her countrymen, but

it is an indictment framed against the past in behalf of the future. She dreamed great dreams of what might be if only the burden of ignorance and superstition were lifted from the crushed spirits of her sisters. She saw them as dead souls, "helpless victims of indolence and false timidity."[1] She would have them begotten again to hope; she would "open the eyes and ears of those who long have dwelt in the prison-house of ignorance, knowing literally nothing of God's beautiful world."[2] "One must have the power of performing miracles," she says, if the age-long sleep is to be broken and these eyes made to see. "Such a miracle," she goes on, "I have faith to believe will be performed in India before the end of the next ten years."[3] No one can doubt, who looks abroad on India today, that that faith was in large measure realized, and that the miracle still goes on.

But not only did Paṇḍitā Rāmābāī address America. Unresponsive as she had hitherto found her own people to be, she could not leave unuttered her appeal to them in behalf of "Mother Bhārat." So, in the hope, as she tells us, of arousing in them a desire to serve that Mother, she wrote, partly while she was in America and partly after her return to India, an account of her travels and of America as she had seen it. This book, published in Bombay in 1889, is recognized by scholars to be, by its style and language, a Marāṭhī classic. In her earlier English book she had written, "It is a popular belief among high-caste women that their husbands will die if they should read or hold a pen in their fingers." This ill-omened task she had dared to take upon herself, and a generation later

[1] *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, p. 101.
[2] Op. cit., p. 115.
[3] Op. cit., p. 116.

the students of the University of Bombay were studying it as a model for the charm and beauty of its language.

The purpose of the book is to introduce the people of her land to the institutions and ideals of a land so different, but able to teach them, as she believed, so much. It presents the story of its progress, of the home life of its people, of their educational attainments, of their religious beliefs and their works of charity—of all those aspects of Western life the sight of which might be expected to provoke her own people to a worthy emulation. She would make another effort to break down the stubborn prejudice of the men of her land, so hostile "by reason of ignorance or jealousy or selfishness"[1] to the advance of women. Accordingly she reveals something of the great achievements of women in America, that from them India may learn what women may achieve anywhere. "I doubt," she says, and here she speaks from an intimate experience, "whether charitable institutions could go on at all were it not for women. In our country, when women go to hear a Purāṇa or to worship God in a temple, they never go empty-handed. They must place before the Purāṇika some gift, money, it may be, or a fruit or a flower, or, at the very least, a handful of rice." "And yet," she goes on, "in spite of that, Hinduism declares that women are compounded of every evil thing in the universe; they are the chains that bind the feet of men. He who desires release should never look on them; they have no right to study the scriptures or read the Vedas. In a word, if there is one thing in the world that is the cause of man's destruction, that thing is woman."[2]

No country can tell a greater tale than America of

[1] युनाइटेड् स्टेट्सची लोकस्थिती, p. 11. [2] Op. cit., p. 199 f.

what women may accomplish for the deliverance of their country from evils of the same dark brood as those that hold such sway in India. This clear-eyed stranger seems already to foresee the advent of the Volstead Act and to descry, still further off, a coming age of peace, and it is women who are in large measure the bringers-in of these good things. "What for a thousand years," she says, "men with all their power and their learning and their leadership failed to do, that women, ignorant, feeble, despised, have accomplished. All praise to thee, O God, who thus, to break the power of selfishness, makest use of those whom the world despises. In Thy hand a straw becomes as mighty as a thunderbolt."[1]

How mighty the straw can become in that Hand she was yet fully to discover. She tells us herself in what mood she set sail on her homeward way. "I felt as if I were going to a strange country and to a strange people. I fell on my knees, committed myself to the care of our loving heavenly Father, and sailed."[2] Her faith was not yet the invincible weapon that it was to become, but it was assuredly in the making. On her way across the Pacific she paid a brief visit to Japan, and by what she saw there she was yet further stirred. What one Oriental country had done, "of its own free will and cheerfulness," surely another could do. Thus we may believe that, as India drew nearer, and as she watched—for nature always spoke to her heart—"the splendid sunsets and sunrises on the Pacific Ocean," courage returned to her steadfast spirit. Seven years later she writes of another sunrise, that she watched in the woods of Lanowli, and it may well be that similar thoughts came to her as she saw the sun rise

[1] Op. cit., p. 310. [2] *A Testimony*, Part VII.

over the Pacific, from the deck of the ship that was bearing her back to her own land and the great task that waited for her there. "One day," she writes then, "early in the morning, I went out to a quiet place in the woods, when I saw the sun rising in his glory. Then I thought of the Sun of Righteousness, and wished much that my people, who were sitting in darkness, should be willing to open their eyes and hearts and see Him rise in His heavenly glory."[1] We may be sure that it was with such thoughts and hopes in her heart that she stepped ashore at Calcutta in February, 1889, and took her way to Poona.

[1] *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, Australasian Edition, p. 127.

V

BOMBAY, POONA: 1889–1896

WHEN the Paṇḍitā reached her own land again, after six years of absence, she found her little Manoramā, a child of seven and a half, awaiting her in the affectionate care of the Wantage Sisters at Poona. But Poona was not to be the place where first in India by this woman's hand a door of hope was opened for the hapless widow. It was decided that a fitter scene for her great enterprise was Bombay. Accordingly, on the 1st of March, at Chowpatty, in that city, there was opened what was called the *Śāradā Sadan*. The name means, "Home of Wisdom," Śāradā being one of the names of Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom or learning, and by an auspicious coincidence the first pupil, who formed the entire population of the institution when it was opened, bore the name of the goddess. She was not a widow, but almost immediately a girl widow was brought to the Home, and thus the number grew slowly but steadily, until at the end of the first six months there were five widows living in the Sadan as boarders and three more as day scholars, while the total number of pupils in the school was twenty-five.

From the beginning Paṇḍitā Ramābāī, though she was a Christian, and made no concealment of the fact, received the cordial support of the leaders in social reform in Bombay and Poona. Among these were M. G. Rānaḍe, who, already in Poona, as we have seen, while she was yet

a Hindu, had shown himself a sincere and steadfast friend; K. P. Telang and R. G. Bhāndārkar, both of them among the greatest Sanskrit scholars of their time; and N. G. Chandāwarkar. Three of these were to become, later, Judges of the High Court of Bombay, while all of them continued throughout their lives to be universally honoured alike for their distinguished public services and for the example they gave to their generation of high character and sincerity of purpose. There were others, on the other hand, who watched the development of her plans with hostility and suspicion, their leader and the most vigilant of her critics being Bāl Gangādhar Ṭiḷak, who already, as we have seen, had revealed himself as the relentless antagonist of most of the causes for which she fought. He was the typical representative of reaction. Thus round the intrepid figure of this little woman were ranged, as friends or foes, the chief protagonists in the conflicts, political, social, religious, that for a generation to come were to cause bitterness and division.

It need hardly be said that Paṇḍitā Ramābāī could not have secured the co-operation and support even of such large-hearted non-Christian gentlemen as those named above if it had not been her policy to grant entire religious liberty to the inmates of her institution. When criticism and suspicion first began to become audible, she published in a leading paper an assurance that no pressure was brought to bear on anyone in religious matters, but that each inmate of her institution was free to follow as she pleased the religious practices of her faith. It was recognized, even by her critics, that the situation was a peculiarly delicate one, and that, with the best will in the world on Ramābāī's part to keep her promise of neutrality, the fact that she was a Christian, and one, too,

of a peculiarly attractive personality, could not but influence the minds of those who looked up to her with reverence and affection. She could not divest herself in the interest of religious neutrality of a charm which was hers by nature, and which was hers increasingly by grace as well. Gratitude and love to one who had brought them freedom and hope could scarcely fail to awaken interest in the faith which, she claimed, had made her what she was. And so presently rumour brought the news that two of the widow inmates had privately professed faith in Christ. Thereupon the clamour grew louder still.

Certainly there was a dangerous attraction in Paṇḍitā Ramābāī, and the only way to guard against it was to remain at a safe distance from her. Miss Hamlin, who was her fellow-worker at this time, gives an account of how those not at such a safe distance yielded to the charm of her character. It was the custom with the Paṇḍitā to conduct family worship daily in her own room. The door remained always open—she would not consent to its being closed—and the girls were free to come in if they wished to do so. What the result was is described by Miss Hamlin. Going to the room one morning when Ramābāī was having morning prayers with her daughter, Manoramā, we found eight of the older girls sitting on the lounge listening intently to the reading of the Marāṭhī Bible. When Ramābāī knelt, the girls knelt reverently with her; and she poured forth a prayer full of fervour. At the close each girl came forward, Ramābāī said a kind word to each and bestowed upon each a kiss which made them very happy. "These are my own private prayers," explained Paṇḍitā Ramābāī. "No girl is compelled to come in; but one by one they have come of their own accord. At first, when they heard me with Manoramā, they peeped in

at the door; then, one by one, they ventured a little further. Occasionally one would sit, but all would leave when I knelt; now all remain."[1]

It is easy to see that that was a situation in which misunderstanding would almost inevitably arise. To the Hindu onlooker the religious freedom which the school promised to provide meant freedom to remain in one's own religion and practise it, but not freedom to change it. But Ramābāī said frankly to one of her leading critics that she could not undertake that a Hindu girl entering her school would remain always a Hindu.[2] Mr. Rānaḍe, indeed, showed much generosity and breadth of mind in his attitude to the Institution. He saw that, whether the Paṇḍitā was a Christian or a Hindu, she was discharging a service of compassion and of help that no Hindu was ready to render. He was willing to take from Christian hands a gift so greatly needed. But there were few like him. The newspaper clamour rose higher and higher. Ramābāī and all who helped her were enemies of Hindu society, of the Hindu religion, and of female education itself. In November, 1890, the school was transferred from Bombay to Poona, as the expense of maintenance there was less and the conditions of life healthier than in so crowded a city as Bombay. At that time the Paṇḍitā had eighteen widows in residence. But the change of location brought no diminution in the vehemence of the assaults that continued to be made upon the school and its head. "At times," she writes in one of her letters shortly after the change to Poona, "the sky seems full of black clouds, and it looks as if it never will be clear."

[1] *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, Australasian Edition, p. 111 f.
[2] Kelkar's *Life of B. G. Ṭiḷak*, p. 328.

But the sky was not always dark above her. She had her compensations. These came, for example, when she escaped from the tumult of talk and calumny and went forth seeking for unhappy widows whom she might gather into the haven of her Home. Her chief reward was in the knowledge that she was helping them, but along with that went sometimes other rewards as well. So it was that the hot weather of 1890 found her back in the Gangāmūla Forest, remembering in its wide solitudes what her father and her mother had done and been. "The whole ground," she wrote to a friend,[1] "seemed hallowed with the association of my beloved parents. The clear blue sky, which looks like a grand canopy over the place, looked more beautiful than any other sky that I had ever seen." She speaks of the trees and the flowers and "the cool waters of the Tungā," and over all at night the stars, the Scorpion and the Southern Cross. Such scenes always spoke peace to her, but God had called her to war—to service and to sacrifice—and she had to turn away from that wide, clear sky to where, in Poona, the clouds were gathering.

The storm broke in August, 1893, and thereafter, if the sky was not clear, at least many ambiguities were ended and the Paṇḍitā could go forward with her plans unhampered. In that month Mr. Rānaḍe, Dr. Bhāndārkar, and other members of the Advisory Committee of the Sadan sent in to the Ramābāī Association in Boston their resignation of that position.

"We have strong reasons to believe," they wrote, "that many of the girls are induced to attend her (Ramābāī's) private prayers regularly and read the Bible, and that Chris-

[1] *Quarterly Mission Paper*, 1890.

tian doctrines are taught to them. Paṇḍitā Rāmābāī has always shown her active missionary tendencies by asking the parents and guardians of girls to allow them to attend her prayers and, in one case at least, to become Christians themselves; and we are assured that two of the girls have declared to their elders that they have accepted Christ. Such a departure from the original understanding cannot fail, in our opinion, to shake the stability of the Institution and alienate public sympathy from this work. We are sorry our individual remonstrances with the Paṇḍitā Bāī have proved of no avail. If the Sadan is to be conducted as an avowed proselytising institution we must disavow all connection with it."

Shortly before this ultimatum was delivered we learn that there were fifty-three girls studying at the Śāradā Sadan, of whom twenty were in the habit of attending the "Scripture Reading Class" and Rāmābāī's daily prayers. It was scarcely possible that such a position of affairs would continue to be acquiesced in by even the most liberal-minded non-Christians, and the rupture may be recognized to have been inevitable.

It need hardly be said that the opposition of Hindu orthodoxy would not have been so fierce, nor the clamour against the school so loud, unless it had within these four years succeeded in achieving a remarkable position and in making its influence widely felt. It was, in the first place, a school for high-caste girls, they being those upon whom the shadow of widowhood fell most darkly. The very first widow admitted to the Sadan was a young woman of the highest caste, who four years later, when the storm of calumny was at its height, was married on the birthday of the school to "a noble-minded young man of her own choice." In what she was saved from, and in what she was saved to, is summed up for us the story of what Paṇḍitā Rāmābāī sought to do for her sisters, and of what, because

in doing it she would have them know the sources of her compassion, her countrymen would not any longer take from her hands.

"She was a widow at fifteen—an ignorant child who could neither read nor write. She was defrauded by her brother-in-law of all her jewels. . . . Her fine linen was replaced by the coarse garment which was henceforth to be the badge of shame. Her head was shaven and every possible indignity was heaped upon her. She was forced to beg for work and food or starve. Work she could not get. Filth, instead of food, was thrown into her little basket. Mocking, taunting words were the only answers to her piteous appeals. Three times she resolved to put an end to her miserable existence; but the fear of another incarnation into womanhood restrained her. She heard of Ramābāī's school and came to it, notwithstanding the curses of her people, who threatened her with excommunication, loss of caste and religion, and with all the plagues they could invoke. She came and was happy, praying night and morning that when born again it might be among the birds and not as a woman."[1]

For four years this lady, hope restored to her, lived with Ramābāī in the Sadan, and left it—she who otherwise could never have known a home or happiness—to be happily married to a young man of the highest character and ability. Her life was thus transformed, and all that she had been robbed of was returned to her. She became a mother of distinguished sons, and at the same time was able to share with her noble husband in work for women, and, especially, for widows which, having its origin and inspiration in what the Śāradā Sadan and its head had done for herself, has continued and increased throughout more than thirty years.

[1] *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, Australasian Edition, p. 110 f.

This story could be paralleled by many another of suffering and contempt as grievous, though seldom with a sequel quite as notable. The Paṇḍitā tells how, in 1891, when rancorous attacks were being made upon her institution, Mrs. Ramābāī Rānaḍe brought to her, on the urgent representation of some of the school's most bitter opponents, a poor persecuted Brāhman widow with her child. "The neighbours could no longer bear to see this disgraceful sight . . . and all of them pointed to our Śāradā Sadan as *the* place for her to go to." There was no other alternative, and compassion overcame prejudice. "Don't you think it quite remarkable," adds the Paṇḍitā, "after all the storm we had surging around us and after our enemies had tried their best in misrepresenting our motives . . . that some of the orthodox and bigoted persons should themselves send a widow to this school?" Thus the conflict went on in many hearts between admiration for one who had faith and courage enough to face isolation and obloquy among her own people for the sake of her suffering sisters and fear of public opinion. There were many, we may be sure, who, though they dared not say so, agreed with the courageous testimony of the *Subodha Patrika*, the weekly organ of the theistic reform movement. "The history of Paṇḍitā Ramābāī's Śāradā Sadan," it said, "may well deserve to be written in letters of gold. A Hindu woman's pluck brought it into existence, and American generosity supports it."

The Paṇḍitā had indeed lit a fire in India, which, slow as it has been in growing into a conflagration great enough to illuminate all the dark regions of that vast land, yet has gone on steadily spreading since that day. The biographer of B. G. Ṭiḷak, in reviewing Paṇḍitā Ramābāī's relationship with that relentless enemy of her efforts, condemns her for

a vaulting ambition that desired to work miracles and achieve startling results. He would have us believe that she had not enough of the spirit of sacrifice. These are strange charges to bring against this woman, who in the passion of her pity for the lot of these unhappy victims of a cruel tradition could not be content to make terms with the bigotry of her day and to accept its deliberate pace of progress. Her critic fails to understand the spirit of one who, turning away from the tyranny of cruel men, catches at God's skirt and prays. No one can ever understand the spirit of this great woman or follow aright the movement of her advancing purpose who does not take into full account the relation of her soul with God. Ten years before, in 1883, she had, with deliberate and somewhat cool resolve, accepted as the highest truth so far discovered by her the Christian religion. How had her eager spirit fared since then?

It is quite evident that at first after her baptism the hunger of her nature was not fully satisfied. She speaks of herself, as we have seen, as being in her loneliness in "desperate need" of religion. What she obtained at Wantage was a steadfast assurance of truth, an intellectual conviction. But there were still wide provinces within her nature that had not come under the full dominion of her faith. There are many gates to the City of God and by whichever gate entrance is gained there is still, thereafter, much land to be possessed. Paṇḍitā Ramābāī had, some years before, become a Theist. "One God and not eight millions," she could have said with the Japanese, Kanso Utschimura. But, as we have seen, the Brahmo theism was too vague and nerveless to content her. A unification that is a blur, a mist, is unsatisfying. She found what she had so long sought when at Wantage she entered the Christian

Church. She had found now a faith that had roots and that bore fruits. Father Goreh by his letters, and the Sisters of the Cross by their works of mercy had convinced her mind. "I was quite contented," she says, "with my newly-found religion, so far as I understood it." Her intellect, it is plain, was in the vanguard here—a keen and powerful intellect—and the cries of her heart were less audible. She was no longer as lonely and unhappy as she had been; she was in England and America among warm-hearted friends. But there was still some disquietude within her. "I was labouring under great intellectual difficulties, and my heart longed for something which I had not found."

Thus it was that—her intellect leading her and her heart, yet hungry, following—she journeyed through America and found there much to dissatisfy her. "I was much confused by finding so many different teachings of different sects; each one giving the authority of the Bible for holding a special doctrine, and for differing from other sects. . . . No one can have any idea of what my feelings were at finding such a Babel of religions in Christian countries, and at finding how very different the teaching of each sect was from that of the others. . . . They only showed that people were quarrelling with each other, and there was no oneness of mind in them." The discord within Christianity produced a discord within this Christian woman's soul: the unification that religion is meant to produce was not complete, and therefore she was not wholly content.

The Paṇḍitā's emotional nature had not yet assumed the reins in her exploration of her new faith. Intellect whose place in religion is the second, not the first, was leading her and therefore she had not yet reached the centre, nor

obtained an assured possession of God as He is in Christ. So far she had not obtained such assured and fully conscious possession of Him, though that He was hers already no one who watches the course of her service during these twilight years can doubt. But "by love He can be gotten and holden; by thought of understanding never."[1] He had not yet been gotten and holden by this woman's heart. "It was nobody's fault," she writes, "that I had not found Christ. My mind at that time had been too dull to grasp the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. The whole Bible had been before me, but I had given too much of my time to the study of other books about the Bible, and had not studied the Bible itself as I should have done. . . . I gave up the study of other books about the Bible, after my return home from America, and took to reading the Bible regularly."

But she needed an interpreter, and she found one. The troubles that gathered so darkly round the Śāradā Sadan had all the time a purpose of good hidden within them, and we may perhaps venture to say that it was they that "tossed her to God's breast." In the presence of the unhappy children cast upon her care, and through the pain that their tending, and the anxiety that the opposition of hostile men brought to her, her great heart, we may say, fully awoke.

"I became very unhappy in my mind," she says, "I was dissatisfied with my spiritual condition." While she was in that state of mind she came upon a book, called *From Death into Life*, by Mr. Haslam, a Church of England clergyman who was greatly successful as an evangelist. The book gives an account of his conversion

[1] *The Cloud of Unknowing*, quoted by Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 57.

and of the remarkable results that followed from it in his preaching of Christ. The reading of this book made her "consider where she stood and what her actual need was." What it seemed to her she needed was an inward change, such as, she believed, had not yet been accomplished in her spirit. Her religion was too external, too intellectual. "For some years after my baptism I was comparatively happy to think that I had found a religion that gave its privileges equally to men and women: there was no distinction of caste, colour or sex made in it." But that no longer sufficed her. "Sin revived," she could say with Paul: the heart's need awoke. "And I died." "I was desperate," she writes, "I realized that I was not prepared to meet God, that sin had dominion over me, and I was not altogether led by the Spirit of God, and had not therefore received the Spirit of adoption, and had no witness of the Spirit that I was a child of God."

The passage that follows in her *Testimony* is a document of supreme preciousness in the records of Christian experience. It shows us what psychologists call the volitional type of conversion, the long process of gradual change, being suddenly transformed and consummated by a conversion of the self-surrender type. It shows us, descending upon her extremity of need, the divine deliverance. God was alike present in both experiences: and in both there is at the same time the co-operation of the human will. But at the second experience it seems as though the divine grace descended with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shone in her heart. "What was to be done?" she cries, as St. Paul had cried—

"My thoughts did not and could not help me. I had at last come to an end of myself, and unconditionally

surrendered myself to the Saviour, and asked Him to be merciful to me, and to become my righteousness and redemption, and to take away all my sin.

"Only those who have been convicted of sin and have seen themselves as God sees them under similar circumstances, can understand what one feels when a great and unbearable burden is rolled away from one's heart. I shall not attempt to describe how and what I felt at the time when I made an unconditional surrender, and knew that I was accepted to be a branch of the True Vine, a child of God by adoption in Jesus Christ my Saviour. Although it is impossible for me to tell all that God has done for me, I must yet praise Him and thank Him for His lovingkindness to me, the greatest of sinners. The Lord first showed me the sinfulness of sin and the awful danger I was in of everlasting hell-fire; and the great love of God with which He so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son. . . .

"The Bible says that God does not wait for me to merit His love, but heaps it upon me without my deserving it. It says also that there is neither male or female in Christ. . . .

"I do not know if anyone of my readers has ever had the experience of being shut up in a room, where there was nothing but thick darkness, and then groping in it to find something of which he or she was in dire need. I can think of no one but the blind man whose story is given in St. John ix. He was born blind and remained so for forty years of his life; and then, suddenly, he found the Mighty One who could give him eyesight. Who could have described his joy at seeing the daylight, when there had not been a particle of hope of his ever seeing it? Even the inspired Evangelist has not attempted to do it. I can only give a faint idea of what I felt when my mental eyes were opened, and when I who was sitting in darkness saw Great Light, and when I felt sure that to me, who but a few moments ago sat in the region and shadow of death, Light *had* sprung up. . . .

"I looked to the blessed Son of God, who was lifted upon the Cross, and there suffered death, even the death of

the Cross, in my stead, that I might be made free from the bondage of sin and from the fear of death, and I received life. O the love, the unspeakable love of the Father for me a lost sinner, who gave His only Son to die for me! I had not merited this love, but that was the very reason why He showed it toward me."

Here the theological interpretation of her experience is in accordance with the stereotyped formulæ which, no doubt, she had often heard from others or read in books. The experience itself also, that is thus interpreted, is the normal conversion experience of the Christian saint. What gives her narrative its exceptional quality is the evident intensity and vividness of that experience as she here describes it. There is "a great and unbearable burden rolled away from one's heart"; and, again, there is the picture of the thick darkness and of the Great Light suddenly shining. This experience is full of what it is the custom now to call the numinous: the wrath of God and fear, and then the blinding blaze of revelation. St. Paul saw this light on the Damascus Road, and St. Augustine saw it also—both of them saints, we may say, of the same stuff as she. "With the eye of my soul," says St. Augustine, "I saw the Unchangeable Light. . . . Thou didst, striking my weak eyes by Thy bright beams of light, beat me back, so that I trembled with love and awe." Paṇḍitā Ramābāī by that day's experience entered into the fellowship of the great saints.

"A new leaf," she says, "was turned in my life." This new discovery was made by her eight years after her baptism, that is, in 1891. There was abundance now in her experience of the joy of which at her baptism she had no more than a foretaste. "My life is full of joy," she says, "I can scarcely contain the joy and keep it to

myself. . . . All the riches, all the gain, all the joys of the world do not begin to compare with joy of salvation." Little wonder, if this was her feeling in 1891, that by 1893 an attitude of strict neutrality, in any sense that could satisfy her non-Christian coadjutors, became impossible. The glow of such an experience could not be concealed. It must out; and immediately "undue influence" would be alleged. So ended this stage in the Paṇḍitā's service of her country. From this time on she was free to follow her own methods, untrammelled.

One of the earliest consequences of this freedom was that in November, 1895, twelve of the girls in the Śāradā Sadan confessed their faith in Christ by baptism. Individuals before this time had become Christians from the Sadan, but this was the first indication that the Christian atmosphere of the school and the influence of the Christian lives of those who had charge of it were producing so great an effect. When the Paṇḍitā's non-Christian friends severed their connection with the Institution it might well have been expected—and it was widely believed—that it had received a death-blow. Twenty pupils were at once withdrawn from the school by their guardians. But the widows themselves whom the Sadan sought to help did not by any means always feel in this matter as others did who were less intimately concerned than they were. This was work that was being done for their deliverance from misery, and work that no one else but this Christian woman was willing to do. "The little widows all over the country," writes Manoramābāī, "heard the gentlemen talking about a dreadful woman named Paṇḍitā Ramābāī, who was a friend to widows, and many thought to themselves, 'If there is a place where a widow is welcomed, I should like to go there.'" And so they kept on going. In 1896 we find

from a reference in a tract by the Paṇḍitā that there were at least forty-nine in the school.

The Paṇḍitā was not likely, indeed, to give way before any clamour or opposition so long as to herself the call of duty sounded clear. She was by nature of the stuff of heroes, and when to that was added the reinforcement of faith, she was unconquerable. From the beginning it had been her custom to seek out the unhappy victims of cruel custom wherever she heard of special need or hardship, and to bring them the good news that in the Sadan they might yet find happiness. With this purpose in view, she visited, towards the close of 1895, some of the sacred cities of North India, knowing well from her own experience that there she would find, more than anywhere else, those who most needed help. She gives an account of what she saw on that occasion in Brindāban, the most famous of all the religious centres that are associated with the early life of Kṛishṇa. "I was told," she says, "by one of my friends, that there were many, many widows, very poor and destitute and starving, at that place. I determined to go there and see for myself the real condition of the poor girls." She disguised herself as a sannyāsi, or religious mendicant, and went to the town as though she, like so many others, was a pilgrim. Only in that way, she knew, could she find out the truth. "Being dressed as a religious beggar, and caring little what people said or what might happen to me, I went round almost all the houses in that town with open eyes to see the condition of the widows. I saw hundreds and hundreds of them. . . . Hundreds, I might say thousands, of widows, young and old, come to these places every year and fall into the snare of the priests. . . . When the poor women get a little older and are not pleasing to these horrid

men, they are turned out of the houses to take care of themselves as best they can. . . . Oh the sin and misery and heartless cruelty of men to women which I saw there on every side is beyond description!" The Paṇḍitā did not mince her words, but she was describing scenes that her own eyes had seen and that pierced her heart. She would be—like the American Liberator—"as harsh as truth," and as one who not only spoke, but laboured and suffered in behalf of those whose sorrows she described, she had a right to speak. "All is not poetry with us," she wrote to her friends in America. "The prose we have to read in our lives is very hard."

The poetry of the Paṇḍitā's life welled up from within. It was the poetry of deeds not words. Since that day when a Great Light shone forth upon her, her emotional nature had gone on discovering ever fuller and fuller fountains of gratitude and rejoicing in Christ and His salvation. The type of religious influence that moved and satisfied her was that which struck, over and over again, one or two chords which are among the deepest and most resonant known to the human heart. No one is left in any uncertainty as to what these notes are; they recur continually in all she writes as embodying the tune to which her whole life marched. They are found, for example, in the hymns which she wrote. She cannot be called a poet, but the instinct that is in us all to sing when the heart is glad seems to be an irresistible instinct in the Indian, and she had to sing. Three hymns by her are included in the hymn-book of the Marāṭhī Christian Church. Of these two are translations, "I've found a Friend in Jesus" and "Have you been to Jesus for the Cleansing Blood?" while the third also is wholly filled with the love and the invitation of the Cross. By these things—love and sacrifice and the joy of

peace with God—she lived, and whosoever spoke to her of these undying things spoke to her heart.

The successful evangelist is one who knows how to evoke in the soul these harmonies, and in the Paṇḍitā's emotional nature was an instrument of extraordinary richness and compass for the hand of the musician. Perhaps it needed little skill or science on his part to do so, for her heart was so attuned that the name of Christ or a hint of the significance of His Cross called out on the instant the response of grateful memory. The music had its source more, perhaps, in the hearer than on the lips of the speaker. And there was always a Third besides these two. So the helpers of her spiritual life need not be supposed to have been great spiritual teachers. They had on their lips the Great Mantra, the Spell, that controlled her emotions and made her tears flow in gladness and gratitude. The love of Christ was their theme, and it never failed to move this woman's heart. "I was greatly helped," she says, "in my spiritual life by attending several mission services conducted by Dr. Pentecost, Mr. Haslam, Mr. Wilder, Mr. Reeve and other missionaries. I received another spiritual uplift by attending religious services conducted by Rev. Gelson Gregson, in 1895, at the Lanowli camp meeting."

It was in connection with the experience which came to her at this camp meeting at Lanowli that she received what she believed to be a further access of spiritual power in the gift of the Holy Spirit. New sluices were opened within her, and God became still more fully and intimately and certainly known and possessed. She travelled farther onwards—and, indeed, we may be sure it was for her an almost continuous progress—in what she calls "the way of this blessed life." She goes on:

Bombay, Poona: 1889-1896

"The last camp meeting which I attended at Lanowli proved to be an occasion of special joy to me, as I was accompanied by fifteen of my own girls, who were believeing in the Lord Jesus and had confessed Him as their Saviour before the public. Amid the troubles and trials that faced me at that time, I rejoiced much to think that the Lord had given me fifteen immortal souls whom I could call my spiritual children. At that time my heart was full of joy and peace, and I offered thanks to the Heavenly Father for having given me fifteen children, and I was, by the Spirit, led to pray that the Lord would be so gracious as to square the number of my spiritual children before the next camp meeting took place. . . . I then prayed to God to give me a clear word about it, and He graciously gave me the following words: 'Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for Me?' (Jer. xxxii: 27)."

With this new and daring hope in her heart the Paṇḍitā faced another stage in her arduous upward climb towards the summit. Her life since she came to years of thought and purpose had been marked by successive stages of revelation and advance. First, in the twilight, as a theistic reformer with a hunger of compassion in her heart, she set herself to climb. Then, as a Christian, she climbs steadily on, setting a stout heart to a steep hill. Next there came an upward rush, all flight and song, but with burdens heavier still and tasks still harder. And at this new turning in the road another view opens to her of the world's pain, to which she has to bring help and a Helper, and of the world's burden of woe which she has, in the strength given her, to bear.

VI

KEDGAON—FIRST STAGE: 1896–1900

"AT the end of 1896," the Paṇḍitā writes in her *Testimony*, "when the great famine came on this country, I was led by the Lord to step forward and start new work, trusting Him for both temporal and spiritual blessings." The methods of the divine leading are as manifold as are the hearts of men, but whatever the way to the end, the end for her was the same, a more complete obedience, a more unreserved surrender. The Paṇḍitā walked resolutely on in the path, as she saw it, of the divine commandment. She had been moved at first by the bondage and ignorance of the women of her land; then by the woeful lot of the widows of her own class, victims of old and cruel tradition. But the more she learnt by loving of the meaning of love, the wider stretched its boundaries. "I will run in the way of Thy commandments," an ancient saint had said, "when Thou hast enlarged my heart." And so also a wise man of a later day: "The greater a man is"—and perhaps still more a woman—"the more objects of compassion he hath." Thus the objects of the Paṇḍitā's compassion grew in number with her growing soul, and her great heart hurried her on in the way of the divine commandment.

The new lesson was taught her in a grim school—the famine of 1896. Her critics said of her that, disappointed at the failure of her schemes for gathering together great



THE PAṆḌITĀ AT MUKTI SADAN
(ABOUT 1910)

numbers of widows, she seized the opportunity that famine brought her of reaping an easy and an abundant harvest. Let those who will believe that this was so. Mr. D. G. Vaidya, the editor of the *Subodha Patrika*, who is no Christian partizan, will have none of such an explanation. "No," he says, "Ramābāī had a very tender heart: she was deeply moved by others' sorrows. She could not bear to sit at home in comfort and plenty while thousands were starving." No one can doubt that that is the simple truth, and that to say that is only to express in other language what she herself describes as the Lord's leading of her forward. The "leading" had begun long years before, when as a girl in an earlier famine she had seen her father's growing weakness and weariness, and had begged food for her dying mother, and when she herself and her brother had lived on leaves and wild berries. "When you go to Raichur," she said to her daughter, some years later, "think of my mother, and remember that it was there that I got my inspiration for famine work."[1] These cruel experiences had sunk deep down into her soul and had lain there, silent but not forgotten, until this new famine awoke them and called them forth to stir all the energies of her nature for a new and harder service. When she went forth at the end of 1896 to the famine area, she went as one long before chosen and dedicated for this ministry of pity.

The famine area was the Central Provinces and Central India. There is no more dread experience to a people that live by what the soil gives them than that of a failure of the yearly returning rain. When that happened in old days there was nothing for it but to lie down and die: and they died all over the land by thousands, and even, there is

[1] *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, Australasian Edition, p. 1.

little doubt, by millions. At such a time the sky was as brass above them and the earth iron. There was little that man could do to mitigate the cruelty of Nature. Death alone was kind. The last of the old uncombated type of famines was the Bengal famine of 1770, which is said to have carried off one-third of the population. From that time on measures were taken, with steadily increasing effectiveness, to bring relief to its victims. And yet, in spite of railways, of gigantic irrigation projects, and of the devoted labours in the actual famine areas of Government officers, such a calamity as the failure of the rains must, among a people so poor and so dependent on the soil as the people of India are, bring with it for hapless multitudes despair and death. Fate, as it seems to them, cruel, inevitable, "slits the thin-spun life." The thread of life, so "thin-spun" in any circumstances in this land, has no strength to stand the strain of hunger and hardship, and the diseases that follow in their train. Thus, even at as late a date as 1901, the census returns show the mortality to have increased within the decade, as a consequence of famine and its sequelæ, by five millions. These were the years during which Paṇḍitā Rāmābāī was constrained, by compassion and her own remembrance of the tragedy of such a visitation, to do what she could to save some of those who otherwise would almost inevitably have perished.

She had her doubts and hesitations: she knew what she would have to face if she went out into these stricken places. Common-sense said to her, she tells us, "You had better stop here and, whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it here. You have no means and no strength to do what you wish. Your powers are limited, and you will not be held responsible for not doing anything to help

these famished people. Indeed, what can a weak woman do to help the dying thousands? Besides, the Government of India and other benevolent people are doing what they can to relieve the poor and needy. There is nothing for you to do." But the arguments of common-sense are not the arguments that have turned the world upside down or that will bring the Kingdom of Heaven. She listened now to another Monitor, whose commands were absolute. "Louder and louder," she says, "spoke the voice of God from within my heart; 'Remember the days of old'; 'Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee,' and, 'Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?'" "I could no longer keep still," she adds, "and I started off for the Central Provinces."[1]

It is not necessary to tell again here any of the harrowing tales that are stored up within the grim word Famine. The first sight she had of it she says she will never forget; —"three little, famished, skeleton-like forms"—a glimpse into the world's Inferno, and that an Inferno of the innocent. "The agony and dismay I felt at seeing that sight cannot be told in words." In a letter written from Bundelkhand she describes the whole pitiful scene as she saw it there, the misery of starvation and with it the added misery of rain. "There was no shelter for the unhappy creatures, clothed as they were in dripping rags, suffering intense pangs of hunger along with the bitter cold of the wind. They were huddled shivering under trees and beside walls: men, women, and children, old and young, all sorts of people, enduring a living death." And in addition to this physical misery there were other ills, worse still, that were

[1] *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, Australasian Edition, p. 130.

not hidden from these watchful eyes. "Wicked men and women are everywhere on the look out for young women and girls. . . . They are carrying on a wholesale trade in young girls who have been obliged to leave their families and wander away from home in quest of food. . . . God help the young girls and young women who are obliged to go to the Relief Camps and Poor Houses! The sight of the pitiable condition of these poor orphans brought to my memory the state which I was in some twenty-two years ago. I bless and thank God for not having allowed us to go to the Relief Camps in the days of our need. . . . There are not many girls who will resist the devil in the face of starvation and death."[1]

The more she saw of the desperate need of so many under the shadow of this calamity, the more resolute she became to go forward to their rescue and to commit to God the care for their tomorrow. "The Lord has put it into my heart to save three hundred girls out of the famine districts and I shall go to work in His name. The funds sent to me by my friends in America are barely enough to feed and educate fifty girls, and several people are asking me how I am going to support all these girls who may come from Central India. . . . I do not know, but the Lord knows what I need." Thus she felt herself driven steadily onward by the logic of her belief in God to live —for herself and for those committed to her care—in the simplest and most complete dependence upon the divine care and the divine provision. "God has given me," she says in her *Testimony*, "a practical turn of mind." If this woman is to be classed as a mystic, then she must be described, along with others who put their visions to the

[1] *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, Australasian Edition, p. 135.

proof, as a practical mystic. "God is not known," someone has said, criticizing the attitude of mystical religion; "He is not understood: He is *used*." It is true certainly that a God who is a superfluity, who is primarily an object of contemplation, or who is a source of inward self-satisfaction alone is not the kind of God that Paṇḍitā Ramābāī had sought and found. Probably she had had enough of such a Being in the *Brahma-vidyā* of her country's sacred literature. The God whom she had found was One in whom she could live and move and have her being, and on whom, she believed, she could rely. "Faithful is He that calleth you." "This golden text," she writes in her *Testimony*, "has been written with the life-blood of Christ on my heart."

About this time she read three books which, she says, "greatly impressed" her. Each is a record of such an experiment in trust as she felt herself impelled to make. These books were *The Story of the China Inland Mission*, *The Lord's Dealings with George Müller*, and *The Life of John G. Paton, Founder of the New Hebrides Mission*. "I wished very much," she says, "that there were some Missions founded in this country, which would be a testimony to the Lord's faithfulness to His people and the truthfulness of what the Bible says, in a practical way." She desired to "find the place by the foot's feel"—"in a practical way"—and she found it. "I feel very happy," she says, "since the Lord called me to step out in faith and I obeyed. To depend upon Him for everything—for spiritual life, for bodily clothing, for food, water, clothing and all other necessities of life . . . is most blessed." This blessedness she claimed for herself, and experienced from 1896 onward. It was the famine that constrained her to this venture of faith, and finding that

beneath her foot was not cloud but rock, she went right on and never once looked back. Her life from this time onward was lived in daily and unflinching dependence upon an unseen Minister of every good.

But even such a faith as she had now resolved to live by cannot be lived on this earth of ours without supports and stays, and most of all at this time the Paṇḍitā needed fit fellow-workers. What she needed she obtained. When she was thrust forth into dreary harvest fields of famine, there had to be those who would remain behind and care for the Sadan at Poona and who would be ready to undertake the difficult duty of receiving and tending the pitiful creatures sent in from the famine area. One of these was Miss Sundrābāī Powar, a Christian lady of closely kindred spirit with the Paṇḍitā herself, who had joined her when she brought the Śāradā Sadan from Bombay to Poona. It was a very different duty that was laid on her now from that of living with and guiding the high-caste girls and widows of the Sadan, but she was ready to discharge it. At this time of need another helper joined the Paṇḍitā, and remained with her for twelve years, Miss Minnie Abrams. With these two colleagues the Paṇḍitā shared the difficult task of reclaiming for a life of health and comfort the unhappy victims of the famine. There were also girls and women of the Śāradā Sadan who had become Christians and who were now called to put into practice the faith which they professed. There could have been no better school for Christian patience and Christian tenderness. That was, no doubt, a main cause that brought it about that presently "seventy-three members of the Poona Institution" were baptized, and among them "several of the Śāradā Sadan girls." One of those baptized at that time was Mr. Gadre, a Brāhman gentleman

who had worked with Paṇḍitā Ramābāī as a clerk for some years, and who continued till his death to be one of her most valued colleagues.

It is not easy to realize how company after company of these wild, undisciplined girls, under new and gracious influences, were tamed and transformed. Paṇḍitā Ramābāī and her helpers had gathered six hundred from the famine area, and of these three hundred had been kept in her own care and the rest passed on to other Mission institutions. These had not only very much of evil to unlearn, but they had also to learn almost everything that religion to a Christian signifies. "They had to be taught to read, as well as to kneel, to pray and to sing." One of those who was happiest in showing these young women the new way of hope was Rev. W. W. Bruere, of the Methodist Episcopal Mission of America, who from this time onward till her death was closely associated with the Paṇḍitā in her work in Kedgaon. It was, he says, the red-letter day of his life when seventeen cartloads of young women travelled to the river Bhimā, six miles away, to confess by baptism their faith in Christ, "singing all the way for very joy."[1] It was no inappropriate thing that this river should be the scene of such rejoicing, for its sacred waters are associated in Marāṭhī religious poetry with many a tale of Vaishṇavite rapture. Such a spectacle was nothing strange on this river's banks, but now it was with a difference. We have not here worshippers of Viṭhobā, "dancing joyful on the sand," but young women rejoicing, as they come up out of the river, that they have been made clean "by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit."

The place from which this company of singers set

[1] *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, Australasian Edition, p. 148.

forth for the river was appropriately called Mukti Sadan, The Home of Salvation, and it is with Mukti Sadan that what was still to come of the life of Paṇḍitā Ramābāī was to be almost wholly associated. The centre of her labours and her thoughts is no longer a "Home of Learning," but a place of salvation. Whatever may have been the case in the past, from this time on, without a doubt, the chief end of her service is always "Mukti," always Salvation. She had been driven forth by necessity or by the guidance of God from her narrower sphere in Poona, to the wide, open spaces where the work she was henceforth to do might more fittingly be done. An outbreak of plague in Poona was the immediate occasion of this decision. Three hundred girls and women brought in from famine areas could not, with this dread disease abroad, be crowded together in the premises of the Śāradā Sadan without serious risk. It so happened—as we may say—that the Paṇḍitā some years before had bought some land near a railway station called Kedgaon, about thirty miles from Poona. Her purpose was to cultivate fruit trees, and so to help by their produce to maintain the work of the Śāradā Sadan. But other fruit was to spring from this barren soil. For a while the Śāradā Sadan remained in Poona, under the charge of Sundrābāī Powar, but it was soon plain that it was around Mukti that the Paṇḍitā's aims and purposes were henceforth to be centred. She turned her eyes away from the wider world as represented by Poona, and from its problems and claims, and concentrated upon this new city of her vision, whose walls were to be Salvation and its gates Praise.

This was a very momentous decision on the part of the Paṇḍitā, and as we see her turning her back upon Poona many thoughts arise in our hearts. It has been the



THE PAṆḌITĀ IN MIDDLE LIFE

custom, all through her people's long history, for some of those who thought most deeply on the meaning of things to forsake the world and give themselves to lives of meditation and detachment. "He has gone from the Council and put on the shroud." What the Paṇḍitā was doing was, of course, something far different. She put on, not the "shroud," but the garments of the service of love. She did not flee from the world; her doors were always open to all comers, and she carried the world's need on her heart continually. But at the same time she narrowed the range of her influence in certain respects, and she did so deliberately. She was henceforth almost as completely confined within the boundaries of Mukti as if she had been a Mother Abbess within her convent walls. Greatly gifted as she was with powers of persuasive speech and with a magnetic presence, she no longer gave these gifts, as she had done hitherto, to India, but to the company, for the most part obscure, unlettered, who lived along with her in the Home that she had made at Kedgaon for so many shattered lives.

Just before the experience that brought about this change in her life had laid its grasp upon her, we have a picture of her in a scene where, it might be thought, she might, had she chosen otherwise than she did, have exercised a different and a far-reaching influence. She had gone into the heart of the city of Poona—a city which sometimes proudly claims to be the intellectual capital of India—to address an audience of students. The following is an account of the scene:[1]

"The atmosphere was so electrically charged that an explosion with any kind of results would not have

[1] In the *Sunday at Home* (May, 1896). Quoted in the *Quarterly Paper* of the C.S.M.V., Poona.

surprised us. With a fearlessness and faithfulness, the secret of which she by-and-by communicated to her audience, the Paṇḍitā appeared and delivered her address. It goes without saying that in form and language (her own Marāṭhī) the address was admirable; but the telling feature was her fearless assertion of the moral and spiritual slavery of the Hindu, and of her hearers as Hindus; their utter inability to help themselves, while yet they were crying out for political privileges; the misery of their domestic system, and especially of the way in which it crushes their women; their weakness in yielding to orthodox clamour when manifest right and justice demanded firmness. Then the Paṇḍitā, holding up her Marāṭhī Bible, claimed to read from its pages the real cause of all this moral degradation and helplessness, even their departing from the living God and His service. It was a striking interlude amid the tension of feeling, when she requested one of themselves to bring down the lamp, so that she might see to read, and one quickly obeyed. Then she wound up by telling them that their opinion of her action, or their threats of doing her physical injury were alike unheeded by her. They might be slaves, but *she* was free: and how? Because the truth had made her so. Her audience, with excitement hardly suppressed, heard her quietly to the end, and suffered her to go unmolested."

Not among these keen-minded Brāhman students, the future moulders of their nation's destiny, was her work to be done; not among the wise or the mighty or the noble. With God she chose the weak things of the world, and the base things, and the things that are despised; and the rest of her life was spent in revealing their preciousness in God's sight. It was a demonstration that India needed far beyond anything else, and its value in the building of the India that is, we trust, to be, is supreme, and will be recognized in time as such. Beyond anything else India needed, and needs,

to realize the preciousness of the human personality, stripped of all accessories, and Paṇḍitā Rāmābāī at Mukti, following in the footsteps of the Friend of publicans and sinners, teaches India that lesson. So, as we watch her turning her back on Poona, we shall say, as she says herself, "there is no room left for murmuring." There may have been a struggle within herself when she made her renunciation, but she goes on to tell us, "Whenever I heed and obey the Lord's voice with all my heart I am very happy and everything goes right."

These changes came about at a time when it was necessary to make new plans in other respects as well. While Mukti had now been established at Kedgaon, the Śāradā Sadan remained still in Poona. But in the case of this Home also new arrangements had become necessary. The Ramābāī Association, when it was founded at Boston, in the end of 1887, undertook to provide for this Institution for ten years. That period was now completed, and, accordingly, Paṇḍitā Ramābāī proceeded to America at the beginning of 1898, to give an account of her stewardship. The Association had been loyal and generous in the fulfilment of its promise; it had undertaken to give five thousand dollars a year for expenses, and had actually given six thousand. For the future the Paṇḍitā's plans and hopes reached out far beyond anything that these figures represent, but for their realization she trusted to no promises or undertakings of any Society, however generous. The department of her work, however, which was still described as the Śāradā Sadan, and which aimed at giving higher education to girls able to profit by it, continued to be a special care of the Paṇḍitā's friends in America. It was necessary, at the same time, to make it clear that this was a Christian

Institution in which those who desired to be taught Christian truth would be so taught. Accordingly, a new Association was formed in place of the former one, making this position clear. "Since then," to quote the Paṇḍitā's own words, "every pupil admitted in the school has been receiving religious instruction, retaining perfect liberty of conscience." Having rendered an account to her American friends and acknowledged "her heavy debt of gratitude for the support and the love and faith which had been so generously given,"[1] the Paṇḍitā returned home in August of the same year.

From this time all the work of which Paṇḍitā Ramābāī had charge was concentrated at Kedgaon. The Śāradā Sadan was transferred there from Poona, and took its place as part of the great project of which Mukti was at once the name and aim. A third department was added, bearing witness to the ever-widening reach of the Paṇḍitā's compassion for her sisters' sins and sorrows. This was the Kṛipa Sadan, a Rescue Home. For this department of her service she had the help of some experienced American lady workers, and how greatly such a Home was needed is sufficiently indicated by the fact that three years after it was opened it was filled with three hundred inmates.[2]

But it was not long before, in the Providence of God, another event happened which brought a further invitation and challenge to this woman's faith. Kedgaon is situated in an area which suffers periodically from drought and scarcity. In 1899 there was much distress round about Mukti; the great wells that the Paṇḍitā's wise foresight had provided for her family seemed always on the verge

[1] Miss Butler, op. cit., p. 53.
[2] Mrs. Dyer, *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, p. 69.

of failure, and yet did not fail. As their bread was given them, so were their waters sure. But with others round about them it was not so. An increasing tide of trouble beat against the doors of Mukti, and the spectacle was one that the Paṇḍitā could not look upon unmoved. But what the district round Kedgaon was suffering was but a little matter compared with the lot of multitudes elsewhere throughout the Presidency and, especially, in Gujarāt. How terrible this famine was—the last, some are sanguine enough to hope, of the great famines that India is to suffer from—may be suggested by a few sentences from a speech of the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, delivered in October, 1900. After estimating the natural losses that this famine had inflicted upon the land, he goes on, "There have been many great droughts in India, but there is no other of which such figures could be predicated as these." Of Gujarāt and Kathiawār, which have been, to quote his words, "styled the garden of India," he says, that "there, in proportion as the immunity hitherto enjoyed has been the longest, so was the suffering most widespread and enduring." He goes on, "For a year it never left hold of its victims; and one half of the year had not elapsed before famine had brought its familiar attendant furies in its train; and cholera and dysentery and fever had fallen upon an already exhausted and enfeebled population. That is the picture of suffering that India has presented during the past year." It is sufficient to add that when, in 1901, the Census of India was taken the increase of population in the decade, which normally should have been nineteen millions, was found to be only five or six millions.

Such was the summons that came in 1900 to Paṇḍitā Ramābāī, putting to the test her faith and courage. Nor did they fail her. She could not now go out herself, as

she had done before, to save the helpless victims of calamity. Sundrābāī Powar was no longer with her, having begun important work of her own in Poona, and Mukti could not now do without the guidance of its head. But twenty of her helpers went out in her stead. "Eight of these were women who had been saved from starvation in 1896."[1] So from that bitter root a plant of healing and of hope had sprung. And He who had accomplished that miracle would, the Paṇḍitā was confident, accomplish the other miracle of supplying the needs of those whom He now, as she believed, entrusted to her care. A friend suggested to her, as she tells us, "that I should be satisfied with five or six hundred girls, as my resources are very limited. It is quite true that my resources are very limited, not only that, but I am literally penniless, with no income of any kind. I own nothing on earth except a few clothes and my Bible." But, all the same, of one thing she is sure, past all doubting—"He will send all that is necessary."

In that assurance she went right on. In 1900 she had at Mukti a population of over nineteen hundred whose needs had to be supplied, "besides over a hundred cattle." And though —even in a year of scarcity and drought—their bread would be given them and their waters sure, that did not by any means sum up all their needs. She sets forth a catalogue of the responsibilities that her faith accepted in their behalf—"how to provide for their education, secular and spiritual, how to build houses to shelter them, how to guard and keep them from bad influences, how to care for the sick, how to train the girls morally to be strong women, how to get their food cooked, their garments prepared, how to keep their dwellings and persons clean and healthy, and a hundred

[1] *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, Australasian Edition, p. 156.

and one other questions which cannot be answered here."[1] Those whom she now encircled with her care were most of them from the Gujarāt province, which had suffered in this famine so severely. They were not, as most of those whom she had hitherto taken charge of had been, from the higher castes; her compassion made no distinctions, and nothing human, however debased by oppression or contempt or hardship, was alien to her wide heart of love. The ministry of caring for these shipwrecked lives—often a very difficult ministry—was entrusted largely to those rescued from the earlier famine. No better school for saints could be imagined than the discipline that these tasks provided. In August, 1900, the Paṇḍitā describes the variety of duties that were laid upon her helpers, "one hundred and fifty noble young women," she says, "who are incessantly working for their Gujarātī sisters, day and night." She goes on to describe the variety of their employments. "Of the thirteen hundred and fifty Gujarātī girls, about one hundred and fifty are under seven years of age, five hundred between seven and fourteen, about six hundred from fourteen to twenty, and the rest are older, but under thirty years of age. So a plan is made for a school with over fifty classes and teachers. These girls are, of course, just beginning to learn their alphabet. Every member of the normal school is expected to teach three hours a day, and the remainder of the time is given her for study. The kindergarten keeps about four hundred little ones well occupied, while it also affords work for those who are being trained as kindergarten teachers. After passing the standards in the primary school, some are put into the high school, while others, who would not be able to earn

[1] *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, Australasian Edition, p. 157.

their living as teachers, are taught some trade in the Mukti Industrial School. These pupils spend half of each day in the industrial department.

"The gardens and fields, the oil-press and dairy, the laundry and bakery, the making of plain Indian garments, caps, lace, buttons, ropes, brooms and baskets, the spinning of wool and cotton, the weaving of blankets, rugs, sāris and other cloth, embroidery and various sorts of fancy work, thread winding, grain parching, tinning culinary utensils, and dyeing, furnish employment for hundreds of girls. Within the last few months a printing-press has been added to the establishment."[1]

The charge of an institution established upon so large a scale and with such a variety of departments and requiring incessant supervision, was, it may be believed, no light burden, but she upon whom the burden was laid was always serene, unhurried. Her day began before four each morning and never seemed to end. By half past eight at night she tells us—it must have been the tale of every day—"my feet were aching and my head was tired." "And the government shall be upon His shoulders." "What a blessing," I said to myself, "that all this burden does not fall on me, but He bears it on His shoulders."[2] And so to sleep with a lightened heart. We must prolong that routine of service for year after year, from 1900 onward, till she was permitted at last to lay aside the weapons of her warfare. Until that day came there was no discharge for this gallant soldier. Day in and day out she was always at the post of duty, and her head was always high and her heart courageous.

[1] *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, Australasian Edition, p. 159.
[2] Op. cit., p. 167.

VII

KEDGAON: 1900–1922

IT is no easy matter for one who is outside the convent walls to realize the atmosphere of the convent or to appraise aright the spirit of its Abbess. The gates of Mukti Sadan were always ready to swing open to any woman or child in distress. Visitors were welcome, and a constant stream of them from all lands came to do homage to the Paṇḍitā and to be inspired by the example of her faith and of its fruits. Her hospitality was as generous as had been her father's in the Āśrama of the Gangāmūla Forest. But the burden that she carried day by day: the petty, wearisome vexations thronging in upon her every hour; her heavier anxieties as she watched and prayed while character grew and took shape beneath her guardian hand, or as she considered tomorrow; her wrestlings, her fastings, her intercessions while she kept vigil in the night watches or long before the dawn—these one who is outside and apart may conjecture but can never justly estimate. St. Teresa left to the world her own account of her life and its struggles and aspirations; other saints have given us their abundant letters. Paṇḍitā Ramābāī's *Testimony* is indeed a precious document, and gives us deep glimpses of her source of strength; but the life of her spirit is written on thousands of women's hearts and stored in the memories of fellow-workers who watched her day by day, of "Akkas," as the Indian women whom she inspired with

something of her spirit were called. We must be content with a rare glimpse of her saintliness, an occasional echo of her gracious words and acts. Miss M. L. Fuller, who has had intimate opportunities of knowing what she calls her "ocean heart," describes her "simplicity, unconscious dignity and perfect courtesy." She tells us how the non-Christians described her as a *divya ratna*, a lucent gem, and how one of her widows, who did not follow her into the Christian Church, said of her, with tears, "She was like God to me and she was holy. She was kinder to me than my own mother." We shall take the liberty of quoting Miss Fuller's description of her as she saw her throughout these laborious years:

"Ramābāī was everywhere, directing and helping; finding out malingerers, prodding on laggards, encouraging and teaching the diligent, and doing many things with her own hands. Anywhere, on those busy hundred acres, might be seen the indomitable little generalissimo—in her spotless widow's white—who, like George Müller, trusted God as if all depended on Him and worked as if all depended on her. She was tireless—though often tired beyond telling—never ceasing in prayer, ever gallant in faith and resolute in praising God through fair and foul weather: 'as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.'"

Of course she now had many more helpers than in earlier days. They thronged to her from all points of the compass—from England, from America, from Sweden, from Australia, from New Zealand. Of the foreign imports who came gladly and eagerly to serve so great a leader it is impossible here to speak, but of one at least of the home products something must be said. This is her own daughter, Manoramābāī, who, after some years of study in England



THE PAṆḌITĀ AND MANORAMĀBĀĪ

and America, returned in the autumn of 1900, at the call of her mother's need, to take her share in bearing the tremendous burden. Her special department was the Śāradā Sadan, which, now incorporated within the greater "House of Salvation," still had its part to play in providing for the education of the girls. She seemed, by her qualities alike of brain and heart, to be one divinely provided to carry on her mother's great task in days to come and to prove herself the heir of her spirit. If things were otherwise ordained in the inscrutable purposes of God, yet from this time onward for twenty-one years she took an important share in the work of the Institution. She qualified herself fully by training for her educational responsibilities, working, we are told, "at a tremendous pace, year after year." Not only did she have heavy responsibilities at Mukti, but, desiring, as her mother had desired, to help high-caste Hindu girls, she started, in 1913, a school for them at Gulbarga, in the Nizam's Dominions, two hundred miles away. She seemed to be straining, not only towards what her mother was and had done, but even towards the places where she had striven and suffered, for just a hundred miles further on was the town where Ramābāī and Śrinivāsa, so long before, had borne to the burning ghaut the body of their mother, Laxmībāī. She was a true heir of the heritage that came down to her of sainthood and of sacrifice.

While Paṇḍitā Ramābāī never forgot that God's human children were bodies as well as souls, and while she laboured with heart and hand and brain for the supply of the bodily needs of those within her charge, yet always these girls and women were for her in the first place immortal spirits. Their souls' salvation, the making of them true children of God—that was never anything but the chief concern of her days and nights. For that reason the story

of "the great Revival" at Mukti, perplexing as are some of its aspects, must be given a large place in the record of these two and twenty years. The urgency of the need of bringing these wild, untamed girls into a new religious atmosphere, of transforming the whole climate of their spirits, was obvious as soon as they began to throng through the gates of Mukti Sadan. The three hundred or three hundred and fifty Christian inmates of the place were in danger of being submerged beneath a tidal wave of grossness and superstition. "The superstitious and idolatrous practices," says Manoramābāī, "which the newcomers brought with them almost overwhelmed the Christians. Many Hindu girls professed to be possessed by evil spirits, and all troubles and diseases were attributed to them. Every death that occurred in the school was thought by them to have been caused by the devil."[1] Christianity does nothing if it does not deliver mankind from the bondage of these terrors, if it does not "by the might of its sunbeam" scatter that darkness and the obscene creatures that that darkness breeds. Fear is heathenism and faith is Christianity. The atmosphere of faith had to be created, and in no factory can it be produced but in that of prayer. The Paṇḍitā was well aware of this, and in the duty of prayer she was not likely to be found wanting.

It had long been her custom to rise up a great while before day and busy herself in her own room, before the secular labours of the day commenced, with the labour of prayer and intercession. Her diary of the routine of daily duty begins with the words: "The big church bell rang at 4 a.m. to rouse everybody from sleep. I was up." Four a.m. seems early enough to arouse anyone, but an earlier call still had already aroused her. With prayer

[1] *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, Australasian Edition, p. 174 f.

went frequently, on occasions of urgency, to concentrate and strengthen it, fasting also. In the case of one with so vivid a faith in God, and burdened at the same time by so heavy and so constant a responsibility, it was the most natural thing in the world to pray and scarcely less so at times to fast. And when she did so and when, as we have seen, this practical woman watched for the results from her prayers, her confidence in Him to whom she committed all her troubles was strengthened. There are many stories of the answers she received, but Manoramābāī tells one which may serve as a sample and which has the interest of being paralleled in the experience of an earlier woman saint. One of the grass huts in which, in 1901, many of the rescued women were housed on one occasion caught fire. The wind was from the east and was carrying the flames swiftly towards the school buildings. The danger was extreme. "Mother," says her daughter, "was, of course, praying all the time that God would help us in some way or other. The men were working as hard as possible, but they, too, were beginning to despair when, suddenly, in a most marvellous manner, the direction of the wind changed, and it began blowing from the west instead of the east, thus causing the fire to recede."[1] Whether it be St. Joan at Orleans in 1429 or Ramābāī at Kedgaon in 1901, He who commands the winds hears the prayers of His saints. But it was not upon such incidents that Ramābāī established her faith in God as an Answerer of prayer. Her "Voices" were those that spoke to her out of the Scriptures, and her faith rested upon an experience of continuous care. So she looked to God as One who not only holds these winds in the hollow of His hand, but also the wind of the Spirit.

[1] *Quarterly Paper* of C.S.M.V., Poona, 1901.

Soon that wind began to blow. In December, 1901, we are told,[1] about twelve hundred of these undisciplined young women submitted themselves to the yoke of Christ and entered His Church. But they were far as yet, most of them, from understanding what His yoke implied. Day by day and month by month the Paṇḍitā sought for them further gifts, and what she sought for she and her fellow-workers, by their teaching and example, laboured to supply; and day by day and month by month the reward of faith and of endeavour was granted. But still she was not satisfied. In 1903 she dispatched Manoramābāī and Miss Abrams to Australia, where she had heard there had been a movement of new life, and soon afterwards she heard with rejoicing of the revival in Wales. These things deepened the earnestness of her desire and strengthened her hope. We must imagine her all the time making her claims, not to be denied, but never slack at the same time in the efforts on her own part. God, says Pascal, has established prayer in order "to communicate to His creatures the dignity of causality"; and in His purpose they co-operate. If we look at her Bible we get a glimpse of the manner in which the Paṇḍitā discharged her duty of intercession. Pasted on its blank pages are lists of hundreds and hundreds of her girls, whom she knew and whose needs she knew and whose cause she pleaded continually. They were not mere names to her, but sisters, friends. Some of those whom she bore on her heart Miss Fuller describes — "the saddest derelicts, and the halt and the maimed and the blind," but she "called all these afflicted ones by the name of 'friends,' lest any despise them." Nor was the Paṇḍitā alone in these labours

[1] Mrs. Dyer, op. cit., p. 99.

of the Spirit. "I was led by the Lord," she says, "to start a special prayer circle at the beginning of 1905. There were about seventy of us who met together each morning and prayed for the true conversion of all the Indian Christians, including ourselves, and for a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all Christians of every land. In six months from the time we began to pray in this manner the Lord graciously sent a glorious Holy Ghost revival among us, and also in many schools and churches in this country. The results of this have been most satisfactory."

That is her brief account of what has been called "the great Revival." Of its fruits in lives changed, in rebel wills subdued, in undisciplined natures brought under a higher control, it is enough to have the Paṇḍitā's restrained summary—"the results have been most satisfactory." There was much that needed to be changed—purity to take the place of grossness, uprightness and honour that of falsehood and deceit, gladness that of sullenness and gloom. Many of the girls were "up from slavery"—members of oppressed and degraded castes, and the task of expelling the slave vices was no easy one. "This kind can come out by nothing but by prayer," and that it came out with loud cries was also according to precedent. What is to be noted, however, is that the aim and consequence of this revival was in the first place and chiefly the abandonment of evil practices, and the experience of joy in the divine love and the divine forgiveness.

Other accompaniments of the movement, however, might well appear less welcome. These were of three kinds, and all of them were physical rather than spiritual or inward. There was the sensation of burning, said to accompany the descent of the Holy Spirit. There was, further, the loud

clamour of simultaneous prayer. And there was, as well, later on, the experience of "speaking with tongues." It is to be noted that in none of these ecstatic accompaniments of religious experience did the Paṇḍitā herself have any large share. The first occasion, apparently, when loud simultaneous prayer broke forth is thus described by Mrs. Dyer,[1] "while Rāmābāī was expounding John viii in her usual quiet way, the Holy Ghost descended with power and all the girls began to pray aloud, so that she had to cease talking."

We are told that on one occasion she was conscious of the Holy Spirit as a burning flame within her, and that once when she was in prayer alone she uttered—as it seemed to her, by another volition than her own—some sentences, in Hebrew. When the women, whose emotions were, we may say, less controlled than hers, prayed with loud crying, she joined in audible petition, but always quietly and without clamour. She accompanied, we may say, and sympathized with, these exceptional aspects of this movement, but she did not lead the way in them, nor did she give them an exaggerated prominence. In the course of a defence, published in the *Mukti Prayer Bell*, of these incidents, against the criticism of many who watched them from outside, she says, "Love, perfect divine love, is the only and most necessary sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But other gifts, such as the power to heal, to speak with tongues, to prophecy, are not to be discarded. Indeed, we should seek from God such gifts as will enable us to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ with power and draw men unto Him. I have to learn a great deal more than I know at present. So I shall wait upon the Lord and ask Him to

[1] Mrs. Dyer, op. cit., p. 101.

teach me and lead me as He will."[1] She believed that these things, while not granted as fully to her as to others, were real indications of the working of the Divine Spirit, and she never sought to restrain them. "I looked upon these features with much concern for some time," she writes, "but did not try to interfere with God's work in any way."[2] With characteristic humility, she watched others obtaining gifts in which she had little share, and rejoiced that they should be so privileged. Perhaps we, however, on the other hand, may believe that the reason for this difference between them and her was that hers was a higher order of mind altogether, that her emotional nature flowed deep and strong—"too deep for sound and foam"—never turbulent, never beyond the will's control. In these girls, newly emerged from an animistic religion, with natures in which emotion was far in excess of idea, it is no wonder that ordinary inhibitions should give way. Such abnormal phenomena are often due, no doubt, to "overwrought nerves and great suggestibility."[3] They are to be found in their measure everywhere where religious emotion is powerfully stirred, among the Chaitanya devotees of Bengal, as well as among staid and self-controlled Salvation Army officers of high rank in London. St. Paul himself experienced them, though he cared little for them. Not only did the wild girls from Gujarāt yield to these gusts of ecstacy, but to some extent even the calm-souled Manoramābāī.

Some passages may be quoted from an account and estimate of the Revival, and of these ambiguous aspects of it, which has been supplied by a sympathetic observer, Rev. (now Canon) L. B. Butcher, of the C.M.S. He saw it both in the effects that spread from it to other centres

[1] *Mukti Prayer Bell*, September, 1907, p. 11. [2] Op. cit., p. 7.
[3] Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 189.

and as it was in Mukti itself. Of the loud simultaneous prayer he says, "It was impossible to hear what anyone was praying about in the volume of sound which arose, and which might continue for an hour or more at a stretch." Again he says, speaking of what he observed in this connection elsewhere than at Kedgaon, "Usually, after the storm of simultaneous prayer subsided, the atmosphere was generally tense, and teaching given seemed to obtain ready entrance and win ready response." Subsequently, Mr. Butcher visited Mukti and found speaking in tongues "a common phenomenon." "Manoramābāī herself," he says, "on more than one occasion, when close to me, prayed for a long time aloud, though the words were absolutely incomprehensible. She told me afterwards that she knew perfectly well all the time what she was praying about, and those who had this gift testified to the spiritual help derived, saying that they had never been able to give God praise or worship in such a satisfying way till they did so in tongues." Of the Paṇḍitā herself he says, "She maintained a very sane attitude, and, while she did not forbid to speak in tongues, and gave full liberty to her workers and her widows, as she did not wish in any way to check the work of God or limit the Spirit, she was kept from the extremes to which some of the exponents of the tongues' movement were led, and I do not feel that the work at Mukti suffered through these manifestations. On the contrary, I could not help seeing what a number of splendidly devoted workers she had, women very truly converted and spirit-filled, with keen love for God and for His Word and also with a keen evangelistic spirit. If this were the outcome of the Revival, I felt it was well worth while even though coupled with these unusual manifestations."

Mr. Butcher's conclusion was that the physical accompaniments of the revival were to large extent "to be explained physiologically, rather than as due to the direct influence of the Holy Spirit." He considers that the Paṇḍitā "showed herself wonderfully wise in the way she fostered and guided the entire movement, so that real spiritual results were conserved and spiritual disorder avoided." The permanent results were "the true conversion of hundreds of women" and "the full consecration of large numbers, making them keen to witness and work for Christ." We may agree with a recent defence of the emotional element in revivals, and say that to produce results such as these, and to produce them in women such as most of those gathered in Mukti were, perhaps "the Great Master could use no fitter instrument than what Newman calls the power of excited feeling."[1] A fire was kindled which, we believe, burned on and burns still.

Before this awakening came the Paṇḍitā had prayed with all the power and passion of her soul that the women and girls of her Home might realize their responsibility for the people round about them. Now these prayers were answered. From this time onward companies of women went forth from Mukti, bearing witness to no subtle discovery of truth but to an experience of new life and joy. They could say, as their great leader herself would often say, "I do not understand, but 'one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.'"

One notable centre of religious desire and—must we add?—of religious frustration in that region is the town of

[1] G. H. Morrison, D.D., *The Turn of the Tide: A Study in Revivals*, p. 14.

Paṇḍharpūr. To that place of pilgrimage Rāmābāī and her father and mother had once journeyed with hungry hearts in the early days of search, and twice they had come away unsatisfied. Later, as a Christian, she had returned there, desiring, we are told, to see for herself whether indeed those who went to the shrine of Viṭhobā went still, as she and her parents had gone, sincerely seeking. She mingled with the crowds and she saw in their faces the same longing, a longing that, she was sure, nothing that they found there could content. So, she says, "the Lord laid that place heavily on my heart since then." Who would go? Now the answer had come. Nearly twenty years have passed since the first band went forth from Mukti to Paṇḍharpūr, but still today in that town a company of those, whose religion in 1907 seemed too emotional to endure long, are bearing their witness in the patience of hope and the steadfastness of faith. Criticism is silenced in the face of facts like these.

It is impossible to give any account here of the routine of the life which in Mukti throughout these years flowed on, sometimes turbulent enough, but with Rāmābāī, calm and somewhat withdrawn, enthroned always at its centre. She was the more aloof because of the deafness from which for long she had suffered. It is said to have been an inheritance from the early days of hardship, when she had often to sleep on the bare, damp ground. It only emphasized a certain apartness which was not strange in one bearing such heavy responsibilities, and one who, knowing whence strength to bear them could be obtained, never quailed before them. She had the natural instinct to command. Hindu observers, in describing the impression her character made upon them, often use a word which means 'lustre' and which seems to be intended to suggest the glow

and ardour of her personality, its aura, as we might say, of authority. An English friend, who knew her in her early days, speaks of her as "very charming and humble and at the same time imperious." She had, she believed, a task given to her, and with quiet confidence she discharged it. People were glad to have her commands laid upon them, and this little woman, in her simple white widow's robe, walked as a queen among her subjects. As Miss Fuller says, "she radiated power." Miss Fuller's description of her personal appearance shows her as she lived and moved in her kingdom. "She was little more than five feet in height. . . . And yet she never seemed small; there was something august about her, not because sedentary life in later years made her somewhat stout; it was rather her remarkable presence and the massive beauty of her head. As a widow she always wore her hair short —orthodox custom demands shaving—and undoubtedly it added to her distinction, for it waved charmingly about her face and head. She had very fine grey-blue eyes, a wide brow, and an open face of great spiritual and intellectual beauty. Her skin was pale, golden olive, very fine and smooth."

Such was the woman who reigned at the centre of Mukti's clamorous life. The secret of her steadfastness lay in the manner in which, day by day and night by night, she spoke with God and hearkened to Him. When the great company gathered in the church, she in her last days, when no longer able to address them, sat in the midst apart, listening to no man and speaking to none, a symbol of the reality of the Unseen. But never at any time was she too far away to forget or to neglect the duties that pressed upon her every hour. Not even the great Revival had eliminated the devil from Mukti; and,

if it had, still there was scarcely a day when his handiwork was not brought to her door. One main function of her Institution was to be a Hospital of sick souls and broken lives. Her faith was always ready to take upon it the burden of those human problems that others had despaired of solving. The faith and courage that faced these tasks had to be, and were, as it appeared, inexhaustible.

There were women who ran away. Not every one has a vocation for the order and discipline, and perhaps monotony, of a convent life. And these girls who, but for Mukti, would assuredly have died, dreamt now with some wistfulness of the freedom that their mothers had among the hills, or felt, sometimes, unconquered passions and desires surge within them. Then there were the physically sick. She would have all trust their bodies, as their souls, to the healing of the Good Physician, and desired to dispense with the mediation of any lesser doctor. But the cruel facts of life compelled another course. Doctors had to have their place and faith had to use their ministry. Never in any case was faith superfluous. Again, there was the thought that faced her anew every day, of how she was to find for that multitude the food of tomorrow; but "our book-keepers," says Manoramābāī, "have learned to calculate just how much is needed day by day." Therefore that burden, too, was transferred to the shoulders of Another, One who gives us day by day our daily bread. In one account[1] by the Paṇḍitā of the day's routine she gives a list of her needs and her petitions, as at the long day's close she goes with them to God: "Strength for spirit, soul and body, Christlike love for girls, freedom in spirit; food, clothing, money to pay wages and buy sāries, material for

[1] *Paṇḍitā Ramābāī*, Australasian Edition, p. 168 f.

building, plans for work, wisdom to meet certain difficulties." So the long catalogue goes on. "I want patience . . .; I want to get this disquietude out of my soul." "At last the burden is rolled off my heart; I am joyful in the Lord and I say with the Psalmist, 'I will both lay me down in peace and sleep. For Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.'" It is rest that is assuredly well earned.

One task that she took upon herself often brought to her tired spirit, we may be sure, both refreshment and recreation. The Bible was to her, it need hardly be said, the one supreme Book. It was her continual companion and guide. That being so, she had no more intense desire than that her countrymen might know this Book and find in it what she had found in it. At the very beginning of her Christian life, when first she brought her Śāradā Sadan to Poona, she set to herself the task of having the Bible translated into Marāṭhī. But in these days alongside of this translation went the translation of the Bhagavadgītā. Presently, as we have seen, a certain change came about in her. She passed through an experience which intensified and, perhaps we must say, narrowed her outlook. She saw a gulf now, which she had not seen before, between the Bible on the one hand and Hinduism and all it connoted on the other. The difference appeared to her as that between light and darkness, between truth and falsehood unrelieved. So much was this so that she, the Sanskrit scholar, would not for many years have that language taught to the children in her schools. She felt that she must guard them against the subtle poison of Vedānta teaching. She did not even allow her own daughter to follow in the steps of her mother and her grandfather, but shut to her this door of culture. Later, when she had herself prepared text-books in the language that were free from the taint of

Hinduism, the door was opened again, and in recent years Sanskrit, we are glad to know, has replaced Latin in her schools. But such was her aversion to the very aura of the sacred language that she feared lest the translation of the Bible into Marāṭhī should be made a means unwittingly of conveying the baleful influence. For that reason, she disliked the translation of the Bible into the Marāṭhī language that was in common use. She considered that many Sanskrit words employed in it suggested Hindu ideas that were wholly alien to the Christian Gospel. No doubt she, with her Vedāntic knowledge, was conscious of this as few would be. She had escaped from the yoke, and she dreaded anything that might bring back that bondage. One may question if the danger is as real as she feared, and one may point in proof to the fact that the name of her institution, Mukti, meant to her, and means to every Christian who refers to it by that name, the Salvation that Christianity brings, even though the Sanskrit word connotes a wholly different circle of ideas.

Rightly or wrongly, the Paṇḍitā believed that there was need of a version of the Bible that was not pervaded, as this one seemed to her to be, with the subtle poison of Vedāntic philosophy. Further, it seemed to her that the current Marāṭhī version was at the same time tainted by "Higher Criticism." She would have a translation that was, as far as possible, guarded alike from both these errors. And for the Paṇḍitā to perceive a path that she believed to be the path of duty and to take it was usually a single act. Whether we agree with her in this enterprise which she now undertook or not, we cannot refuse our admiration of the characteristic promptness and purpose with which she faced her difficulties and overcame them. Through year after year, almost till her death, she gave all the time that

she could spare, from a life that seemed already intolerably burdened, to the discharge of the task of preparing and printing a version of the Bible that would, she believed, reach more easily the simple people's hearts. For this work she not only obtained the assistance of Indians of the Beni-Israel community who had studied the Hebrew Scriptures, but she herself acquired some knowledge of that language and of Greek as well, in order that she might supervise the translation with intelligence. Further, her version was composed and printed and bound by the women of Mukti themselves. For the Bible thus prepared, and issued at the cost of much toil, but of toil gratefully given, the Paṇḍitā could never bring herself to accept any payment. As one who owed so much to a copy of the Bible that had been given to her as a free gift, she always refused to allow her version to be sold. Freely she had received, she said, and she must freely give.

We can understand how this task was to her, even amid the besieging cares of Mukti, a daily refreshment and cheer. No labour would be counted other than light by this heroic spirit if it brought the Bible and its message closer to her own heart and if it brought it at the same time home to the heart of her fellow-countrymen. For that reason, though she was sometimes critical of versions that the British and Foreign Bible Society issued, she loved and honoured the Society itself above all other missionary societies, and its work above all other work that was being done for the missionary cause.[1] Thus it came about that when, in 1919, the Kaisar-i-Hind gold medal was bestowed by the King-Emperor upon the Paṇḍitā, and when she could not, because of physical weakness, receive it personally

[1] During the last ten years of her life she contributed over Rs. 11,000 to the funds of this Society.

from His Excellency the Governor, she chose that she should receive it from the hand of one for whom, both for personal reasons and because of her relation to the Bible Society, she had a warm affection. This was Mrs. R. A. Adams, the wife of the Secretary of the Bombay Branch of the Society. For a number of years the girls of her institution had been in the habit of giving one-fifteenth of their daily grain allowance as a contribution to the funds of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Her generous heart was always finding ways of helping other good causes, heavy and continuous as was the burden of her own necessity. Her delight, as Miss Fuller says, "was to be always giving," and if she had only a little to give the first gift must be one bestowed to help in enriching others with that Bible which had so enriched herself. In 1922, a few days before her death, Mr. R. A. Adams visited her in Mukti. Weak as she was at the time, she sent for him to her room, and, though unable to speak and unable to hear, she wrote with trembling hand a message which has in it the gratitude that lay always deep within her heart. "I want to say," she wrote, "that I greatly appreciate your Society's work. I have been a Christian for thirty-eight years. I have found a great salvation through the Society's work. God bless you and yours."

The fact that the Kaisar-i-Hind gold medal was bestowed upon her in 1919 deserves some notice. The Paṇḍitā's aims and methods were not likely to win the approval of a Government pledged to religious neutrality. Nor had she always found it easy to bring the principle of faith in the divine care, obeyed by her so uncompromisingly, into harmony with the requirements and regulations of the authorities. The King-Emperor had no more sincerely loyal subject than she, but the things of God had to be



MANORAMĀBĀĪ. WITH ONE OF HER CHARGES

rendered first to God. Sometimes it seemed to her that the anxiety that those in authority were bound to feel lest disease should break out among so great a multitude as was gathered at Mukti, proceeded from unbelief, and she was unwilling to take all the precautions that were demanded. But such misunderstandings did not long continue. The Paṇḍitā on her part came to realize that the Government had a duty that they must discharge, and she gratefully accepted their instructions. The Government officers, on the other hand, who saw with their own eyes what was being done for the helpless and the neglected at Mukti, were filled with admiration for her and for her fellow-workers. This was indeed an oasis amid the waste places of India's poverty and disease and misery. The blind, the epileptic, the fallen—anyone who was a "problem" that everyone else despaired of—such found a door always open for them at Mukti, and, friendless no longer, were numbered at once among Ramābāī's "friends." The Kaisar-i-Hind gold medal, which is bestowed, we are told, "for merit alone," could find nowhere in all that land one more truly worthy to be honoured than this woman who, serving first another King and seeking His Empire, was at the same time laying deep foundations for an India from which many old and evil things shall have passed away.

That new India, that is to descend from God out of heaven, Paṇḍitā Ramābāī was to see only with the eyes of faith. One of the hopes to which she strongly held was that of the speedy coming of her Lord. It was not long now till He came to her. But, first, on July 24, 1921, her daughter, Manoramābāī, died. To many who realized her great qualities of brain and heart, it seemed a blow irretrievable, an inexplicable providence. One who seemed to be Paṇḍitā Ramābāī's manifest and designed successor

was removed, and her place left empty. But no such fear or unbelief seemed to visit the great and steadfast heart of Manoramābāī's mother. Her old friend of pre-Christian days, Mrs. Ramābāī Rānaḍe, who had seldom seen her since those days of early friendship, but whose admiration and affection for her still remained, went to Kedgaon to visit her in her trouble. She came away after a day spent in her company, amazed and humbled by her courage. "And," she added, somewhat wistfully, as she told the story, "she preached the Gospel to me." There was that in Paṇḍitā Ramābāī that lifted her above the cares and the sorrows, even the sorest sorrows, of earth—her sense of God and of eternal things. Among these her heart dwelt, and the more so, no doubt, as her strength failed her and earthly cares receded. At the same time, this withdrawal never resulted in neglect of the responsibilities that pressed upon her from hour to hour. High as her spirit soared above the mists of time, her body remained chained to the discharge of duties of which the strain could never be relaxed. Her faith and courage no trials could exhaust, but sixty-four years had passed since she set out in her mother's arms from the Gangāmūla Forest on her pilgrimage to God.

The goal was now near. Rest, which she would never take of her own choice, was at last to be given to her. On the morning of April 5, 1922, "she slipped away quietly in her sleep as the day broke." "Weeks before," says Miss Fuller, "with her usual foresight, she had set her house in order. The very day before she died she wrote a letter about the disposition of some children." "As she crossed over the river," said the Collector of Poona, Mr. W. F. Hudson, at a memorial meeting in her honour some weeks later, "I think that surely all the

silver trumpets sounded, and her ears, so long deaf to earthly sounds, were wakened to hear her Master say to her, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'" No words could express more worthily that triumphant exodus and entrance.

VIII

WHAT SHE WAS AND WHAT SHE DID

WHEN Paṇḍitā Ramābāī passed into the presence of her Master it was for her enough to hear the words, "Well done." There is nothing that can reach beyond that verdict when uttered by these lips. But for us, who have her life as a pattern and an inspiration, what she was and what she did must be more fully examined and understood. She received, as we have seen, a rich inheritance from those who went before her—the ten talents, on the one hand, of a spiritual nature directed with intense longing towards God, and on the other, of a secular capacity alert, capable, strong. With these she was endowed as belonging to a stock rooted in the ancient Hindu race, as a member of the Chitpāwan caste of Brāhmans, as the daughter of a Vaishṇavite saint and scholar. How she put these gifts to usury is the story of her life and service. The Hindu became a Christian; the Chitpāwan Brāhman became the servant and the friend of the widow and the outcaste; the Vaishṇavite devotee became this woman of faith and prayer. That in these ways she enriched her life infinitely no one can doubt. The question that, of all others, tests the claims of a religion is that which St. Bernard asks in his hymn—*Sed quid invenientibus?* What is God proved to be in

anyone's discovery of Him? Paṇḍitā Ramābāī would ask to be judged by no other judgment. At the beginning of her *Testimony* she sets down these words of Jesus, addressed to the man whom He had healed: "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."[1] Her testimony to God is the first, and by far the most significant, aspect of her life and her life's value.

Someone once said of her that she was an "Old Testament Christian." That is a shallow verdict, but it emphasizes some of the most obvious characteristics of her religious experience. If it is suggested that she stopped short of Christ, then nothing could be more untrue; but it is true if it seeks to emphasize the fact that she travelled to His feet by the Old Testament road of revelation. She shook the dust of the Vedānta from her feet, and chose instead the path of the psalmists and prophets of Israel. Sin become exceeding sinful in the presence of a righteous God, and so sin abhorred—that was one side of her experience, and it is far removed from anything that the seers of the Upanishads appear ever to have known. Her religion has its deep roots there, and when she prays she kneels with Hebrew penitents. "The Vedānta, and its teaching about unreality," she says, "is drunk in by us with our mothers' milk. . . . Our people do not feel the burden of sin." She did, and, as a consequence, there was no limit to her gratitude. Therefore, along with this sense of sin there goes in her a sense, that knows no limit, of the divine grace. For her, as for St. Paul, the Cross of Christ is the symbol of a divine compassion that has wholly conquered her. Sin and grace are the two poles around which her

[1] Mark v: 19.

universe revolves, and over her, therefore, rules with complete dominion the God who of His grace has delivered her from sin by Christ Jesus. It is a faith at once simple and stupendous. As a consequence, life can never be *māyā* in her eyes; it means intensely, and means either good or evil, weal or woe.

This is a religion that centres in the will, reached by way of the heart. She had come forth from an intellectualism that paralysed the will and starved the heart, and so she, perhaps, went too far in refusing its rights to reason. But she saw that these things had sapped the strength of her people. "Self-reliance and energy are dead within them," she said.[1] She discovered that by the fear of a righteous God we obtain deliverance from every lesser fear; that only by surrender of our wills to Him can our wills ever be made strong. "What empire," she could say with a kindred spirit, St. Teresa, "is comparable to that of a soul who from this summit, to which God has raised her, sees all the things of earth beneath her feet and is captivated by no one of them?" She attained, by the complete surrender of herself to God, to such an empire, and the surrender was a glad and willing one when God was known by her as the God and Father of her Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

In her revolt from a conception of God so solely immanent as to be little more than an idea, she may seem to have thought of Him too largely in terms of His transcendence. Others in India, who have not travelled all the way to Christianity, have realized, as she did, that "a God of truth and without iniquity," even if He seem a God of terror, is the only safe port for sinful men. Devendranath

[1] *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, p. 101.

Tagore was one of these. "I saw," he says, "His terrible face, 'dread as an uplifted thunderbolt,' and the blood froze in my veins."[1] Thus it comes about that to Paṇḍitā Ramābāī the future is aflame with apocalyptic visions. "The most precious truth that I have learned since my conversion," she says in her *Testimony*, "is the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The signs of the times have taught me to be waiting for Him." The eschatologist, it has been said, stands "at the bedside of a dying world," and that is where Paṇḍitā Ramābāī seemed to herself sometimes to be. The result is that for her "ultimate values and eternal issues stand out stark and clear."[2] The world, apart from the services of love to which God calls her, is no more than a little dust under her feet. If it is only by the Jewish road that men can reach these overwhelming convictions of God and of the solemn significance of life, then that road can never be allowed to become grass-grown. India may blaze a trail to the feet of Christ by the way of the bhakti of her saints, but she can never do without the profounder and more moving bhakti of the Hebrew penitents, for to them God is not only a God far off and greatly to be desired, but a God nigh at hand to help and to deliver. So, along with these apocalyptic visions, based as they are upon her belief in the divine transcendence, there went for her confidence that God could work His will now, and work it even through His feeble children. Not as a dream that she had once dreamed, but as an experience that she herself had proved, "the straw in His hand becomes mighty as a thunderbolt."[3]

[1] *Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore*, p. 95.
[2] B. H. Streeter, *Foundations*, p. 120. [3] See p. 73 above.

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One does not usually account strength of nature to be one of the qualities grown on the soil and among the languid airs of Hindustan. "Mild," is the traditional adjective that is prefixed to the noun, "Hindu," by the patronising foreigner. And yet there is evidence enough that Indians, and not least Indian women, are often possessed of a tenacity and a power to endure that give proof of a latent strength that occasion can at times evoke. The Paṇḍitā, in one of her narratives, writes of "the angel that brought me a message from the unknown God." The angel was a "cross-eyed" little Brāhman widow, whose story of misery deeply moved Ramābāī.[1] She had not yet found her life's meaning in Christ Jesus. "It was," she says, "the then unknown God to me who was showing me how I could have the great hole in my heart filled up with a purpose." Later came the discovery; the unknown God became known and Ramābāī became transformed. She saw that for her "God had a mission and a deed to do." All the elements of strength that were latent in her were called forth and reinforced by her new faith in God and in His purpose. Not all the articles of Paṇḍitā Ramābāī's creed can be accepted by all those who kneel by her side in worship and obedience, but by her invincible trust in God and the depth and passion of her love to her Redeemer, she gives them an example that they never can outgrow. Because of Paṇḍitā Ramābāī's faith, the Christian Church in India can now with new confidence claim possession of its inheritance in Christ Jesus.

That is the debt that Christian India—the Church already born and the Church as yet unborn—owes to this woman. But there is another debt as well—if we must account it a lesser one—that all awakened India should be

[1] See p. 58 f. above.

ready gratefully to acknowledge. She was a patriot. No one who reads her utterances can fail to realize that she sympathized, with a feeling of passion, almost, we might say, of violence, with the wrongs and the sorrows of her Indian sisters. To deny the sincerity of her devotion to her country's good is impossible. What she desired was to break the bonds that bound the women of her land, for so only would both men and women become capable of freedom. "The men of Hindustan," she wrote, "do not, when babes, suck from their mothers' breasts true patriotism."[1] She desired that they should. But did she take the right path to that goal when she broke with the past in the manner in which she did? One cannot fail to compare her career as a social reformer with that of her early friend, the greatest leader of his generation in reform, Mahādev Govind Rānaḍe. They separated when she chose the road of rebellion. He was not, as he himself acknowledges, "constitutionally inclined" to adopt such drastic methods as appealed to her.[2] Woman as she was, there was more of the courage of action in her nature than in his. His was the temper not so much of the reformer as of the scholar, a temper averse to extremes and that sought diligently for a way of compromise. She, on the contrary, seems to have had few of the hesitations of the intellectualist and to have been always rapid in decision and prompt in action. He knew and could describe with strong emotion the evil traditions that held his people in bondage, but he had never seen them in all their ugliness as she so often had. Her school of reform had been those years of pilgrimage, when she had looked into the corrupt heart of a system which she became convinced must be destroyed. Therefore, not evolution but revolu-

[1] *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, p. 97.

[2] Kellock, *Mahādev Govind Rānaḍe*, p. 94.

tion was the method to which she was impelled. Rānaḍe is at one with her in recognizing the need of awaking men's dull ears to hear the voice of God and in lamenting the prevailing lethargy. "We have benumbed the faculty of conscience within us," he declares.[1] He felt that he and his people were "paralysed and shaken in their best resolves." In these circumstances, when otherwise she would have despaired, Paṇḍitā Ramābāī discovered for herself and, if they would but use it, for her countrymen, a wholly new spring of energy and inspiration. She could not remain content, as Rānaḍe seems to have been content, with Victorian dreams of progress "broadening slowly down" or of "a self-improving universe."[2] Some source of regeneration and of power had to be found, if hope was to shine for India, and she found it. Nothing less than the life of God Himself, flowing by new sluices into her people's veins could, she believed, deliver them.

What she wanted from the first for her sisters was freedom, and this desire, when it has awakened in the hearts of the enslaved, has often proved to be a high explosive. On the cover of her quarterly paper, *The Mukti Prayer Bell*, there is a picture of the American Liberty Bell and—on the early numbers at least—the text, "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof."[3] To her, as to St. Paul and Martin Luther, Christ was the great Breaker of bonds, and only He, she believed, could proclaim liberty to the captives of her land. There will always be those who, in the cause of reform, accept the method of Erasmus, as there will always be those who believe rather in the method of Luther. Rānaḍe's social and political ideal was

[1] Kellock, op. cit., p. 97.
[2] Inge's *Outspoken Essays*, First Series, p. 172.
[3] Leviticus xxv ; 10.

"to be at once tolerant and catholic, deeply spiritual and yet not iconoclastic." Paṇḍitā Ramābāī, on the other hand, took her stand over against the social and religious traditions of her people as a Protestant and an iconoclast.

It is open to debate how far—in the sphere of social reform—Ramābāī's method or Rānaḍe's is the more effective. In the matter of religion there can, indeed, be no debate. There she followed her convictions in scorn of consequence. She could not be disobedient to the heavenly vision. But for the ends of the reformation of society which way is the best? To this question no positive reply can be made. This at least, however, we can say, that Paṇḍitā Ramābāī, by her word and by her example, did more than any other individual to direct attention to the cause she represented and to create a conscience in regard to it. The influence, as propaganda in behalf of the cause of reform, of her outspoken speech and her energetic actions, was of the utmost value. She set up a ferment in Hindu society the effects of which are not yet exhausted. She appeared at a time when, we may claim, what the Hindu social system needed, far more than mild admonitions, was deeds. When she led the way others followed, and the remarkable progress in the emancipation of women that Western India can show within the last thirty years owes much to the impetus given to it by her powerful personality. Professor D. K. Karve, whose name is so honourably associated with the women's movement throughout this period, himself bears witness that it was from Paṇḍitā Ramābāī that he obtained his inspiration.

She was a pioneer, and her gift to India lies less in what she actually achieved, immense as that achievement was, than in the example of faith and courage that she gives to India as she stands in the grey of its new dawn. She had

many notable qualities—such as, for example, an "executive capacity" that, in the opinion of Professor Karve, "stands unparalleled in India"—but it is the strength and charm of her whole personality that win our admiration. No one who came in contact with her at all can have failed to feel it and be subdued by it. And in spite of the fact that she rejected peremptorily so much that we call Hindu, it was as what we must call a Hindu woman that she so charmed and subdued. Her soul was in its texture Indian, and in her we see what such a soul may be under the control of Christ. The instinct of India, in spite of so much alienation and so much calumny, recognized with pride this kinship, and, when she died, in many of the cities of the land people gathered to honour one who by her life had brought honour to her race. In Bombay, at a public memorial meeting, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, a lady who, as poet and nationalist leader, is notable among the daughters of the new India in a very different fashion from the Paṇḍitā, laid claim to her in behalf of Hinduism as "the first Christian to be enrolled in the calendar of Hindu saints." We may concede the claim in the sense that this saint brought "the glory and honour" of the Hindu spiritual heritage into the Christian Church. Its glory lies, not in its subtle and ancient speculations—which she rejected—but in the devotion and passion of its long search for God. Of these things in Hinduism she, through all her life, by her pilgrimages and by her prayers, is a supreme example.

She was no philosopher, no weaver of "forest treatises"; nor could compromise ever commend itself to her passionate heart. There was nothing anæmic about her religion; she did not choose the middle path or make indifference or "apatheia" her ideal. Her faith

was "all out" to place her life in God's charge and to trust Him directly and wholly. And so the truth she lived by was no pattern of grey hues, but something woven of blue and purple and scarlet, of white and black. And yet, though Hinduism is to her the region of darkness, from which she of God's great mercy has been delivered, she belongs in the fibre of her being to the old India, the India of the *ṛishis* and the *bhaktas*, the India of Maitreyī and Muktābāī. She belongs also to the India that is in travail, whose future no one ventures to predict. One way in the building of the new India is the way that Paṇḍitā Ramābāī from deep conviction chose, the way that makes Christ the architect of India's future. She had no concern for nation-building—only for the Empire of Christ over the souls of men. She would have India believe that "the soul's wealth is the only wealth," and all that wealth is for her stored up in one beloved name, Christ Jesus. Upon eternal things—faith, hope, love—she built her fabric, "a house not made with hands, eternal." In that deep sense she, surely, has a place among the builders of the India that is, we trust, to be.

If it seems to some that such architecture is shadowy and unreal, then they must at least concede the great share that this practical mystic has in a lesser task that is yet essential to India's emancipation. For, as we have seen, she did more than any other to call attention to the wrongs done to India's women and to create a conscience that demands that these wrongs be righted. India has travelled far since, in 1878, the young Marāṭhā woman startled Calcutta by her learning. India has very far yet to travel ere she obtains true inward freedom. But the debt that India owes to this woman has yet to be realized and acknowledged. She is certainly one of her country's liberators; and

first she had herself obtained her freedom. In a sense other and far higher than Hinduism understands the word, she was a *jivan mukta*, one who walked free in a world enslaved. One of her sayings, a saying that "would be golden on the lips of Augustine," discloses the completeness of her deliverance from every bondage. "Depending altogether," she says, "on our Father, God, we have nothing to fear from anybody, nothing to lose, and nothing to regret." The bonds are broken. She, and those who share her secret, have attained Swarājya.

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